



Penny Parks

4th June 1943 to 11th July 2020

Her life Story & Her Poetry

DRAFT

by
Rod Tallowin

Separation

by W.S. Merwin

Your absence has gone through me
like thread through a needle,
everything I do is stitched with its colour.

A good friend of mine said to me after Penny died that often you don't really get to know people until you go to their funeral. As with all of us, we each have different facets which different people may see depending on both perspective and context. For those that knew Penny (the vocalist) in the musical world may not have known about her therapy work in the field of Childhood Abuse, conversely those that knew her from the therapeutic side may not have been aware of her vocal talents. Although, as she usually finished off a workshop or training session with a song those people are more likely to have had some inkling of it. Penny was also an excellent artist and poet.

For most of us, we would hope to have some positive impact in life – to make a positive difference to the lives of others to one degree or another, even if it is just within our family environment. Penny though made an incredible positive impact and difference to the lives of so many people during the course of her lifetime. Providing inspiration not just through her therapy, but also through her music, talks and workshops, and with it, left an incredible legacy both directly and indirectly - a legacy that would be very hard to match.

I am minded of the saying:

What we do for ourselves dies with us

What we do for others lives on after us.

Penny's legacy of the work she did for others will certainly live on.

Through Penny's work she made aspects of her abuse public. Many that knew her though, may not have been aware of the challenges that Penny faced behind the scenes as it were, which made the person that she was to become and make the contribution that she was able to make to the lives of others.

As Penny died whilst in Covid lock-down a conventional funeral was out of the question. My aim was to have a big celebration of her life at some stage, and even set a date for one in September 2021, but eventually had to cancel that as the infection rate of Covid was on the rise again and travel restricted. Whilst at the time of writing this biography of Penny's life I still hope to have a celebration of her life at some time. In the meantime, this book will provide an insight into the amazing person that was Penny Parks.

Penny's Life Story

Most of us would like to think that we will leave a positive footprint and legacy in our lifetime. That we have managed to touch a few people in a positive way. Asking ourselves that old questions of what we would like our epitaph to say about us. The extent in which Penny made her impact on life and the number she left her mark on however is in a completely different league to most of us. Through her music, her therapy, her workshops as well as through her friendships and the people she simply interacted with on the street, Penny has not just touched the lives of thousands, but in many cases saved the lives of many of them, providing them with the opportunity of a full, complete and satisfying life worth living. She was a fine example of how to turn adversity into opportunity.

Both before and since her passing she received many stories of her impact on various people's lives, below is just one example:

Back in 1992 I had the gift of visiting Penny whilst she lived in Trimley, near Ipswich. As a 36 year old man, struggling to come to terms with sexual abuse as a child, Penny gave so much that went a long way to saving my sanity. She taught me how to uncover the roots of the mistaken beliefs that dominated my thinking, and put me onto the path of mental hygiene I practice to this day.

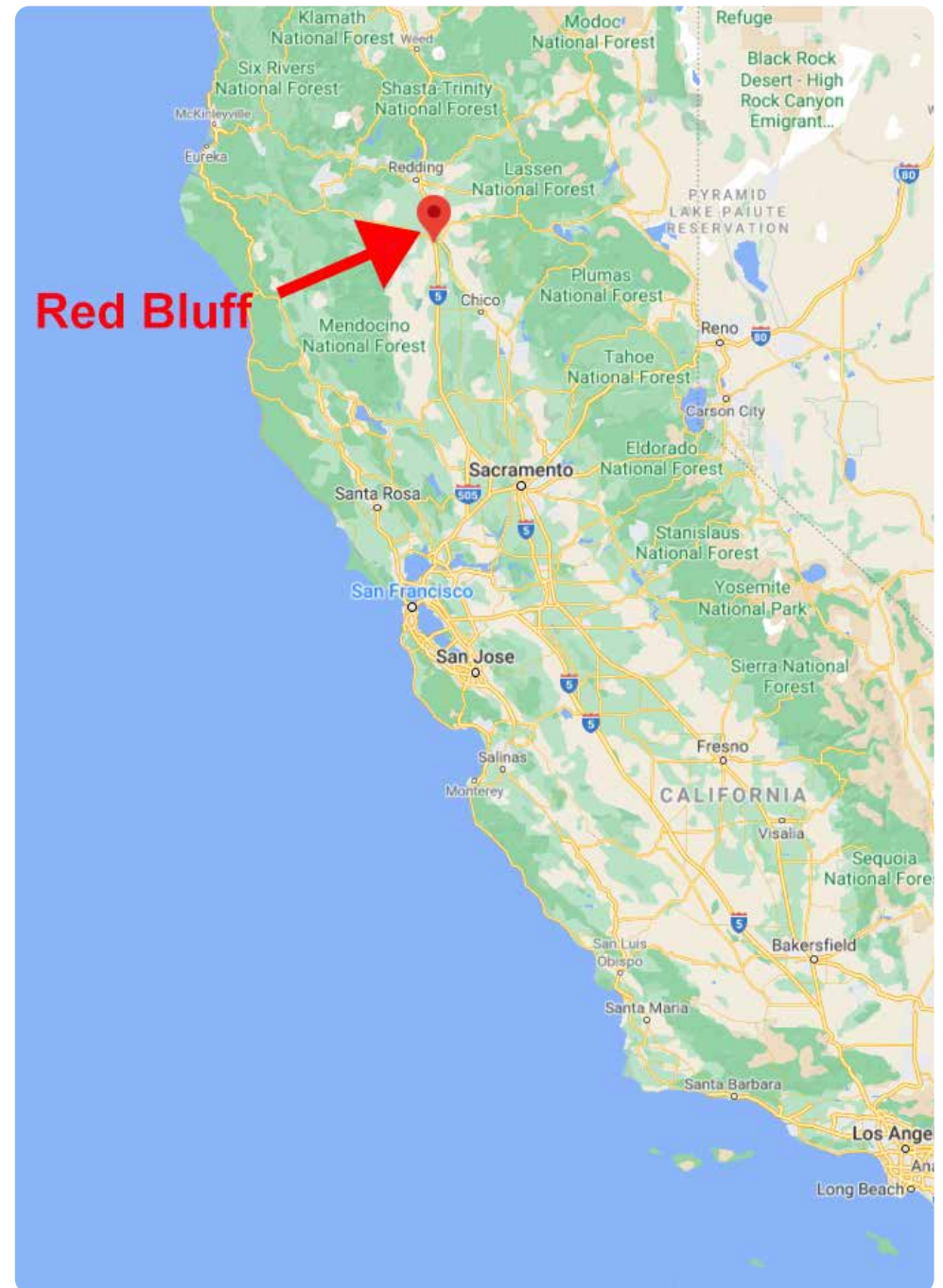
I am a different man to the one Penny showed how to go to my safe place, and help my inner child to dress himself as he wanted to be dressed. The first time she showed me that I was loveable is an event I remember vividly 28 years later.

In 1993 she even attended my wedding.

So many things in this life can shape us, but the gifts Penny gave me truly helped. The simple method of finding the mistaken beliefs and correcting them with truth, is a technique I have practiced on many occasions. It is with pleasure I can say that from the mentally dangerous place I started from, with Penny's help, I am now a peaceful, satisfied man.

So, where did it all start and what gave rise to this remarkable life?

Penny was born on the 4th June 1943 in a town called Red Bluff in northern California. Her mother, Margaret, was surprised by Penny's appearance, not because she didn't realise that she was pregnant, but because she was expecting



a boy called Bobby. It is not as though Margaret had undergone an ultrasound scan and knew it would be a boy, she had just decided that was what she was having and had already planned to call him Bobby. She had given birth to girls previously and this time wanted a boy, so she was therefore surprised and disappointed when another girl came out instead.

The problem arose when it was time to leave the hospital as she had to give the girl a name before she left. Not having prepared for such an eventuality, she simply turned to the nurse in the room at the time and asked what her name was. The nurse replied "Penny", so that is how Penny got her name, not Penelope – too difficult to spell – just Penny. She also added Ruth, the name of Penny's aunt, as a second name for good measure.

That is how Penny Ruth Siler came into the world.

Penny's natural father, William Graden Siler or "Slim" as he was known, was a sheep shearer, bartender, general labourer and a wife beater. He had a very good singing voice and enjoyed partying, but had quite a temper and used his fists to make his point. The relationship with Penny's mother, Margaret, didn't last too long and she left Slim, taking Penny with her. She then married Elbridge Hampshire (Al), and soon became pregnant again. In the meantime, Slim had kidnapped Penny and would not give Penny back unless Margaret left Al to go back to him, which she did whilst still pregnant with Al's child. When the new baby (Judy) was born she was immediately given up for adoption as Slim did not want to keep another man's child. Penny was just three years old by the time all of this had happened.

Margaret married Slim, but only stayed with him for a short time and then left him. In total, Slim married four times and had a total of five children – one boy and four girls – all of whom are half sisters/brother to Penny.

Penny's mother, Margaret, married 6 times and had a total of four female children, all to different fathers, so all are half sisters. The last of these, Al's daughter (Judy) that was adopted out, was three years younger than Penny and they only connected up in 1981 when Penny was 38. The other two, Peggy & Dolly, were 11 and 13 years older than Penny and were living with their respective fathers by the time Penny was 2 years old, so Penny was effectively brought up as an only child.



By now you are perhaps already starting to get the picture of Penny's highly dysfunctional family life.

Margaret later met Manley Wiberg, known as Pat or Shorty with whom she and Penny spent the next nine years with. He worked as a heavy-duty machinery mechanic on road construction jobs, therefore they moved every six months up and down the west coast of America.

In a later interview about her life Penny described this family where her father was a wife-beater, her first step-father was a wife and child beater and sexual abuser, and her second step-father was also a sexual abuser. Where Penny's mother was a self-absorbed, insecure, blaming and accusing person who could not bear to be seen as wrong, Pat was an arrogant aggressive man who felt inferior and defensive because he was only 5'4" tall. He was a violent wife and child beater and child molester who worshipped money. Emotional abuse was a daily event and Penny was the scape-goat that everyone dumped on. Penny was regularly whipped with a leather belt.

In all, between the ages of 3 to 13 Penny was abused by 6 different people – only one of which was not a relative – he was a "friend" of the family.



Penny aged 15 months

The nine years Penny and her mother lived with Pat covered the ages between 4 – 13, and as a consequence of moving every 6 months up and down the west coast of America, Penny attended 21 different schools from the age of 6 up to 13 years old at which time they finally settled down in Colusa, a small town in Northern California. It was a wonder that she managed to get an education as in many cases each school was either on a different curriculum or different stages of the curriculum, so she had to pick it up as best she could. The benefit she did get from this was to learn how to make friends very quickly.

Although Penny only lived with “Slim” for a short time and she only had two short memories of him, the one thing she gained from him was his talent for singing. As a release from the problematic aspects of her childhood Penny often performed to her dog Queenie whilst standing on a trailer in the yard as a stage.

Slim shot himself in June 1953 at the age of 43 – 3 weeks after Penny’s 10th birthday.

Margaret left Pat and returned to Al in 1956 but told him his baby (Judy - Penny’s younger half-sister) had died. She stayed with Al until his death in 1981.

Penny's mother was aware of the abuse she was subjected to, and even stumbled on it happening on occasion but, as so often happens, simply ignored it and turned a "blind eye" to it. It reminds me of Winston Churchill's quote:

"People stumble across the truth from time to time, most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened".

This is an all too common situation because of which, the victim often ends up resenting the parent that knew about the abuse and did nothing to stop it more than the abuser themselves.

Penny followed a familiar pattern whereby as a child, the result of this abuse made her believe that there was something very wrong with her and that whatever it was, it had caused all the abuse. In many ways, she believed that she was 'bad and dirty' and therefore deserved whatever unkind, cruel or painful things people wanted to do to her, carrying around this big secret that could never be told. She often made derogatory remarks about her own looks, behaviour or intelligence to try to convince people that insults didn't hurt her.

This **self abuse was her self defence**. These are all very common feelings for victims of abuse. In addition, with moving and changing school on such a frequent basis, Penny was always the 'new girl' – extremely skinny and treated as though she was a freak.





Penny - aged 12 (1955)

A pretty miserable start to life for most people. However, on top of this, Penny was born with a serious heart condition, Patent Ductus Arteriosus, and wasn't expected to live beyond her teenage years.

She tired very easily and was not allowed to engage in sport or physical activity at school. She often fell asleep at the dining table and her mother just called her lazy.

In 1958, at the age of 15, Penny underwent open heart surgery at Mount Sinai hospital in San Francisco to correct the problem. Penny's surgery was only the fifth successful open heart surgery carried out at the hospital at that time. Fortunately, the surgery was successful, and Penny was then more able to engage in a more normal, active life.

The local newspaper made quite a feature out of it, although it was based on an interview with Penny's mother and, according to the notes that Penny subsequently annotated to it, most of what Penny's mother said was absolute rubbish.

DRAFT

1958

Colusa

97TH YEAR

Colusa Sun Est. 1862

Miracle Operation

Penny Siler's Dream Warms Human Heart

By LOTUS EAST

Most everyone at some time or other has cherished grandiloquent dreams of what they would do in the distant future, but to Penny Siler, pretty brown-haired daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Al Hampshire of 430 Third Street, her dream consisted mostly of "one day being able to dance, swim and walk a bit without getting so tired."

This dream can now become a reality. Penny, a sophomore at Colusa High School, will be able to do all these things and more, because of a miracle operation which has only been perfected for three years.

Although Penny is only 15-years-old, she has spent the last seven years of her life in a self-imposed state of invalidism. She had been diagnosed as having rheumatic fever, but through a local doctor's interest and concern over her condition, Penny was sent to Mt. Zion Hospital in San Francisco for a thorough examination.

Iraqi Executes 60 Rebels Trials

CAIRO - A government troop of 60 rebels was executed in a trial, Middle East reports said. An officer in the city of Iraq.

The reductions the government made in the military through

What a load of rubbish! Mom gave the interview & the incorrect info & quote I didn't make. I was late to classes because I was talking with my friends. I never wanted to be in P.E. classes & I never have been

NOTICE

TO BIDDERS

of Trustees of the School District, Colusa, will receive until 7:20 p.m. on April 1, 1959, for of a lawn sprink-

must use the bid by the school. A bid form and the may be obtained of George T. Eg-Superintendent of School District, Colusa, shall be accom- nified check, bid-cashier's check in of ten per cent total amount bid, of the Colusa Uni- trict.

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E. T. EGLING

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(Mar. 11, 18, 25)

NOTICE

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Miracle Operation-

(Continued from Page One)

convenience for this operation which would make her "like other girls."

However, her mother came down with pneumonia and that delayed the operation. Too, Penny was running a fever, a symptom that is prevalent in heart cases of this type. After several weeks of treatment, Penny was ready for the big day.

On March 3, she underwent three and a-half-hours of surgery. The operation set in motion a number of teams within Mt. Zion's Cardiac Surgery Center . . . involving the surgeon, physician cardio-physiologist and the clinical cardiologist. This particular type of surgery uses the new heart-lung which apparatus is primed with approximately five pints of blood which is especially collected and prepared. The machine is attached to the patient by means of a tube inserted in the aorta by way of the main artery in the arm or leg of the patient. Through this tube the blood is pumped into the patient after it has been oxygenated.

The blood then is withdrawn from the patient by putting another tube in the great veins as they enter the heart. This effectively by-passes the heart and lungs. With this method the blood pressure, brain waves and cardiogram remains normal even when no blood is passing through the heart. With the heart emptied of blood, the surgeon can open one or more chambers and repair any defect that may be present and is available for repair.

In Penny's case, this procedure was followed. Possibly when she was born, the closing which runs from the pulmonary artery to the aorta had failed to close

CONCERNED ABOUT SCHOOL

At present, Penny is more concerned "with getting behind" in her school work. She is a good student, her mother said, and took most of her books to the hospital with her with any number of assigned lessons to complete, so that she wouldn't be too far behind her class in school work. Penny wants to be a secretary when she graduates from school. To help realize this ambition, she works in one of the school offices during her free time.

Penny has a lot of pride and she has never been one to talk about her "illness." This pride nearly got Penny expelled from school recently. Mrs. Hampshire received a note from the school principal recently in which the school authorities deplored Penny's "excessive tardiness" in going to classes. Penny had never related the fact that it took her more than the allowed time to get from class to class . . . an omission that was getting Penny bad marks. She just couldn't walk that fast. It was an effort to expend that much energy and climb stairs. She had to rest every few minutes and to "catch her breath."

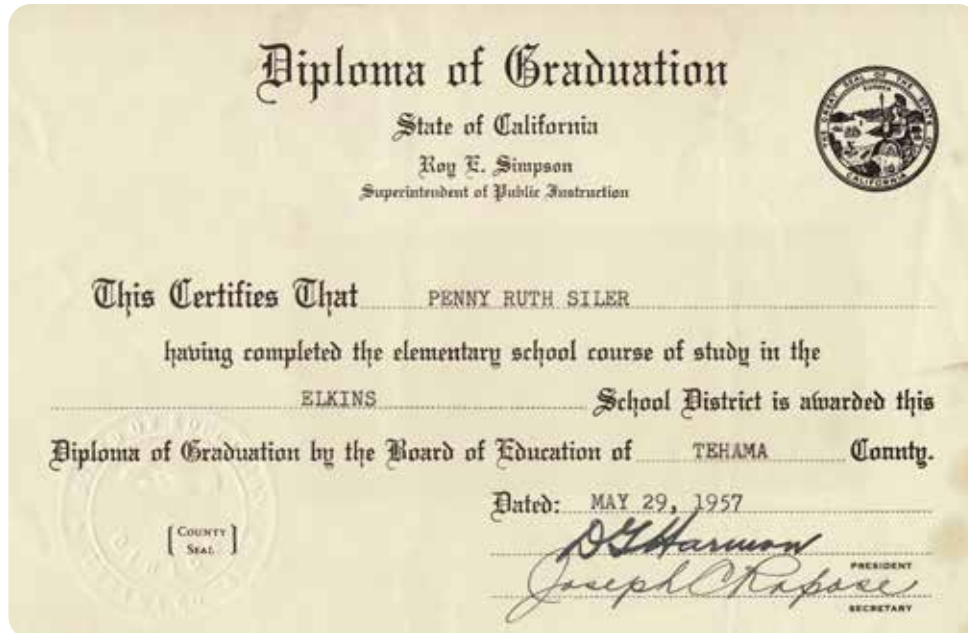
After Mrs. Hampshire explained this fact to the school heads, they understood the problem and immediately took steps to correct the situation.

Another dream that Penny may soon realize is that participation in the physical education classes. She has never been able to take gym, but is looking forward to this school activity with great relish.

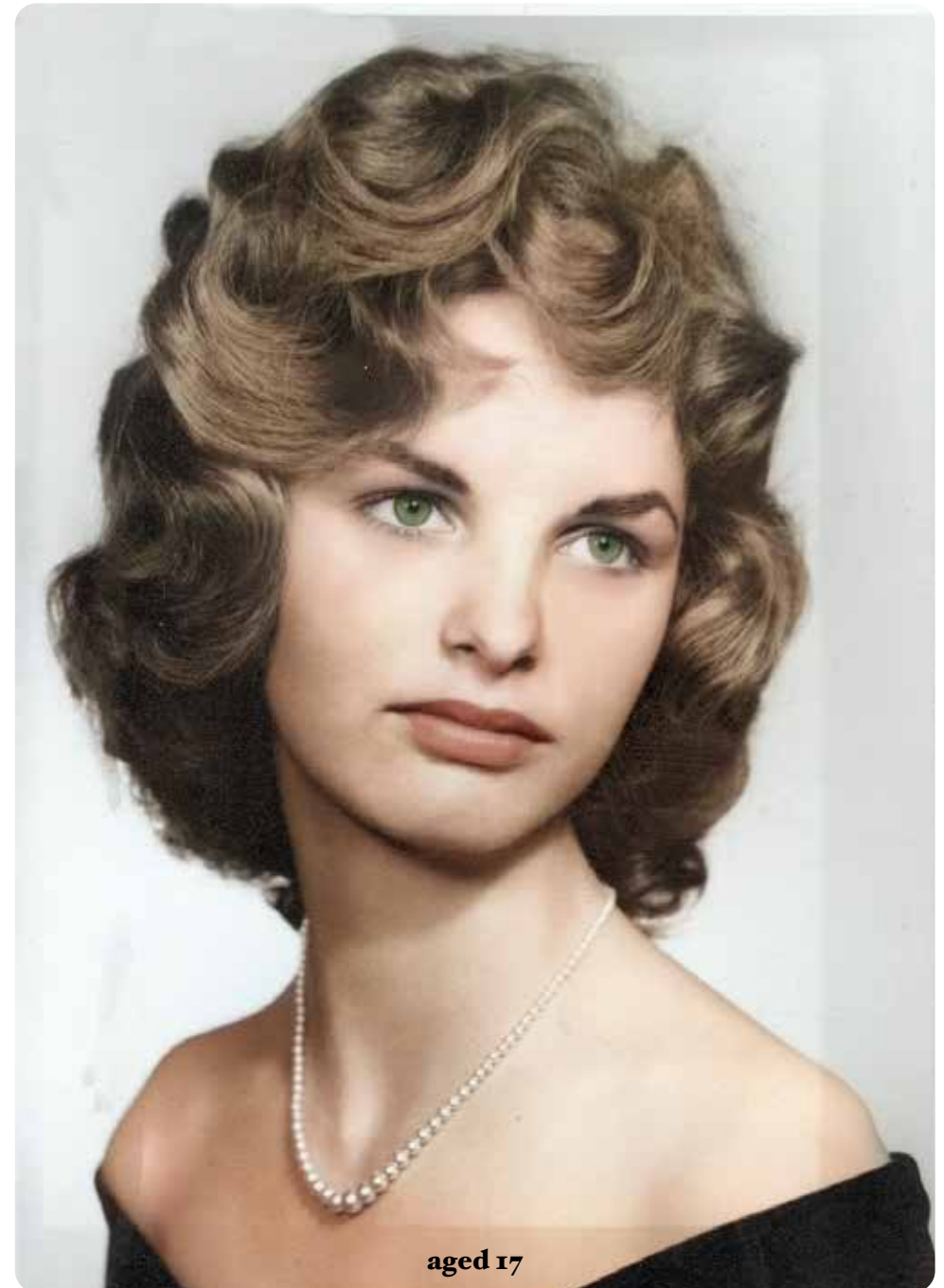
"Can't wait to wear a pair of shorts and be like the rest of the gang," Penny said adding "that I have always been so thin and tired."

In addition to the surgery mir-

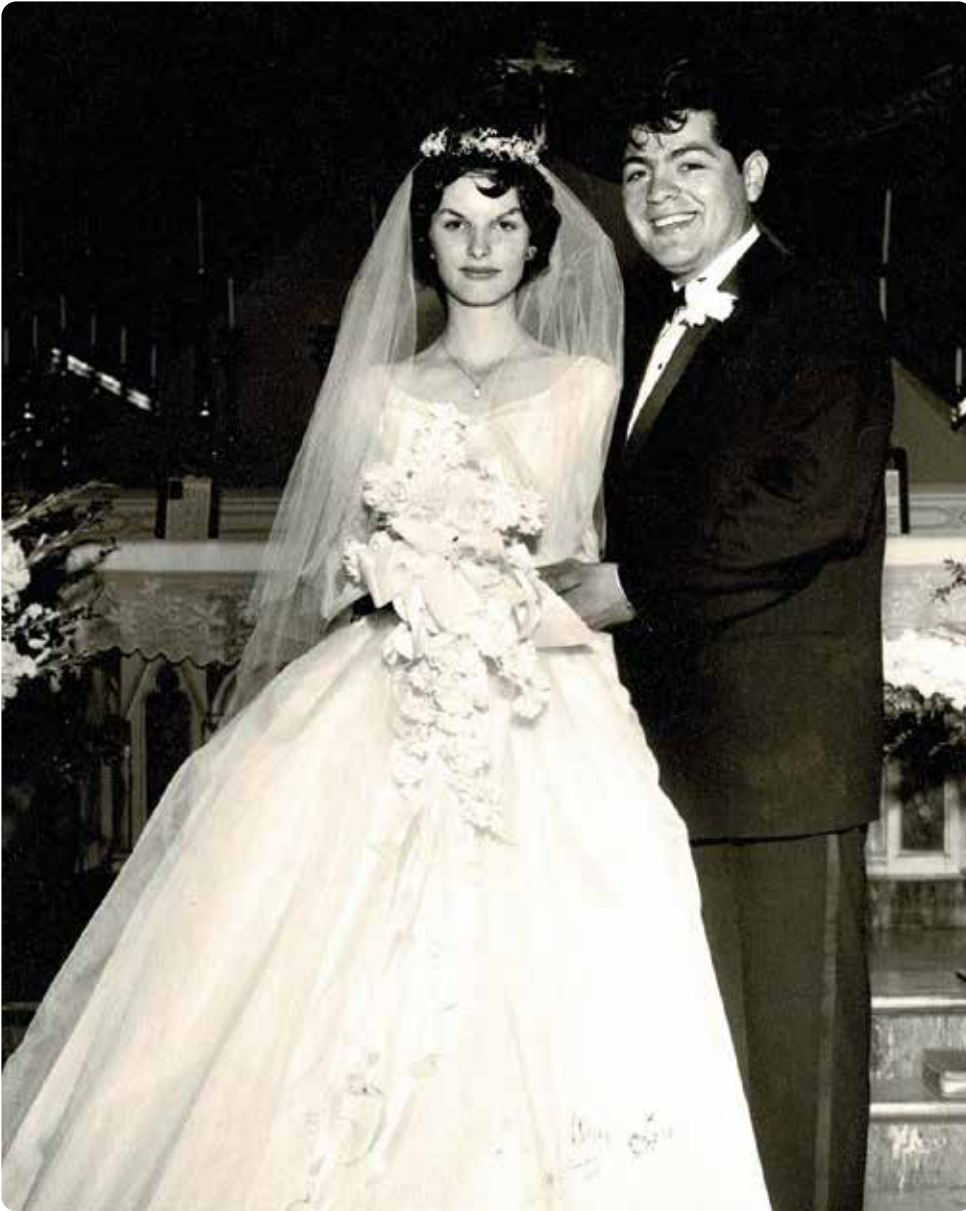
Despite Penny's erratic schooling she did manage to graduate from High School in May 1957.



She later got a job as a telephone switchboard operator which she enjoyed and did well at. This was the time when if you wanted to make a telephone call you called the operator and they would dial up the number for you. It often gave the chance for the operators to listen in to some interesting conversations. One of their regulars had such a lovely voice they all imagined him as some tall dashing hunk. When one day they realised that he was calling from a call-box across the street, they all ran to the window to see what he looked like. To say that they were disappointed was an understatement – short, fat, grubby and nothing like the Adonis that they had anticipated.



aged 17



In 1961 at the age of 18, Penny married David Gomez, a Mexican and an unpopular choice in Penny's racist family. David, however, was a kind and easy going man, and in 1963 Penny gave birth to Dolly Ann and two years later to Angel Kathrine Renita.



Dolly



Angel

In 1967, aged 24 and 2 years after giving birth to Angel, Penny collapsed and went into a coma, weighing just 95 pounds (6 stone 11 pounds). She was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes which she had for the rest of her life.



Unfortunately, after 11 years the marriage broke up and Penny and David divorced in 1972, but they remained friends. A relationship which became more like that of brother and sister rather than ex-husband & wife. A relationship which was subsequently much appreciated by Dolly & Angel.

Penny eventually entered into another relationship (with a chap called John Siler – no relation) that lasted for five years until John left Penny for a man. During this time, they opened a shop together called “Miss Penny” which made and sold jewellery.

One of Penny’s stories from the time that she ran “Miss Penny”, the jewellery shop, was the day that a customer came in and asked if Penny could make a pendant out of something she had brought along. She then produced a pack of tissue paper and unwrapped it revealing a glass eye that had belonged to her father. Penny was rather surprised to see this rather gruesome looking thing looking back at her, and that someone would want a pendant made out of it. However, she reluctantly agreed to do something with it, re-wrapped it and put it on the workbench. That was bad enough in itself, but John at the time was suffering from a bad cold and getting through a lot of tissues. Sometime later Penny went back to the workbench to make a start on the glass eye, but the package had disappeared. It seems that John had thought that one of his used tissues had landed on the bench so had swept it into the waste bin. Penny then had to sift through a bin full of used tissues to dig out the glass eye before washing it off and starting work on it.

She also did modelling, was an Advertising Manager of a weekly newspaper, and of course singing. She sang with a keyboard player called Ron, doing anything from Country & Western to Phoebe Snow and Carole King.

Penny Siler named Herald ad manager

Not many of us can combine a variety of interests with our jobs. But Penny Ruth Siler, who was named the Valley Herald's new Advertising Manager this week, does.

Ms. Siler's appointment to the post was announced to the staff by General Manager Jay O'Connell.

This attractive Red Bluff native is able to pursue her art and creative writing interests in her present capacity. In addition, she models for some of her accounts.

The only thing she is not allowed to do is to practice her singing on the job.

But this doesn't hinder her. She manages to vocalize enroute to work or while picking up ads, she revealed.

Ms. Siler is the mother of two daughters, Dolly, 17, and Angel Gomez, 15, and both attend Yuba City High School.

She has had training in graphic arts as well as in retail clothing



Penny Ruth Siler

sales.

In addition, she presents workshops at the Yuba-Sutter Enterprises and is an active member of NOW.

Ms. Siler's future plans in her new position include "ads that are as interesting as the news." She wants the designs to be eye catching and attractive.

But most of all she plans to offer productive and creative ad programs.

Ms. Siler finds her job exciting, stimulating and challenging.

"I enjoy people," she said. "I consider my accounts as friends."



DRAFT

Also during this time, Penny did a lot of work on herself. In an interview many years later when asked “You created your own therapy model “Parks Inner Child Therapy”. How do you even begin to do something so incredible? She responded – in her own words:

“Desperation! I was lucky to realise that the childhood abuse was why I had all of the problems and low self-esteem. So, I tried every idea that came to me to ‘get over it’.

There were no books on childhood abuse then, so I looked for books about some of my problems. I read a book about Transactional Analysis that described the Parent, Child and Adult inner parts of people. I easily recognised all the damaged self-talk described and tried the various exercises outlined. Unfortunately nothing in the book worked for me but I did recognise those damaged inner parts.

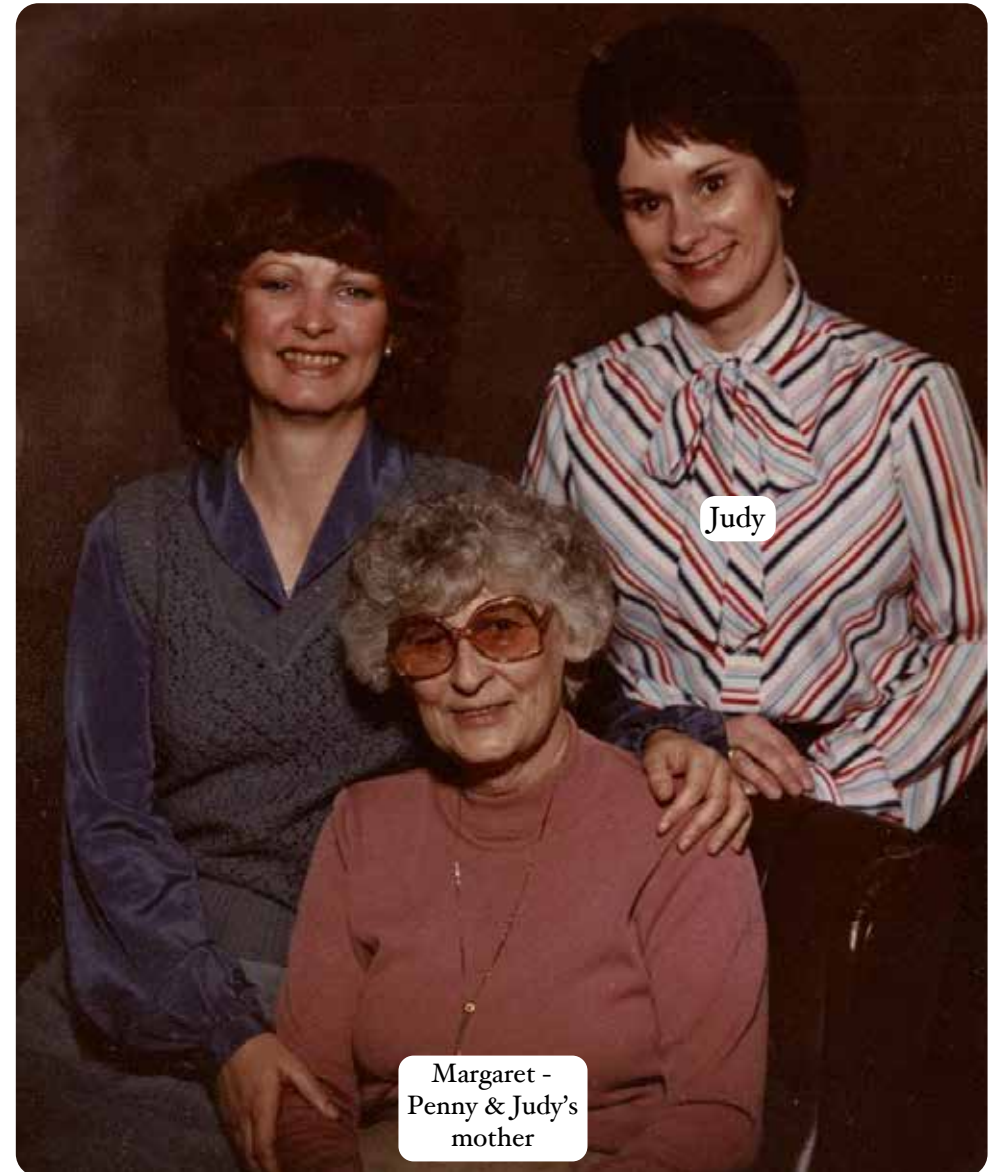
Over the next ten years I used my common sense, intuition and first hand knowledge to create various ways to ‘fix’ those inner parts. Some ideas were useful, some not, but I persevered until I had a basic set of letters back and forth to my inner child giving her the information, support and love. It was a long trek with no promise of success but what choice did I have but to persevere?

At that time (1960s and 1970s) adults who told psychiatrists that they had experienced sexual abuse were told that they were fantasizing or had penis envy. Plus, I didn’t have any money to pay for therapy.”



Penny eventually trained as a Crisis Counsellor, began a support group for sexual abuse victims and worked for a women’s refuge.

As mentioned previously, Penny had a half sister, Judy, that had been adopted out at birth that Penny didn’t know about.



Judy tells the story:

My adopted mom died in 1977 and a few years later I wondered where my birth mom was and if I had any brothers or sisters. In 1980 I contacted WARM, which is an organization that helps people find their families. It took them over a year to find my mom. She kept moving so many times and didn't have any roots. Finally, they found her in Colusa, California in August 1981. When they called her she hung up on them.

Finally, Penny answered the phone and they explained I was looking for my birth mother. Penny was shocked but not surprised that our mother had lied to her and the family all these years about me. She had told everyone I had died at birth. Our mother did not want to talk to me but Penny did. Penny called me and we talked for quite a while. She was getting married to Larry soon and they were going on their honeymoon to Eugene, Oregon, which is 3 hours from us - so we planned to meet. I took my daughter, Michelle, and we drove to Eugene to meet Penny. It was so exciting! we talked about our lives for a long time, as you know, Penny is quite a talker.

Then at Thanksgiving that same year, Larry planned for Mike and I and our 3 kids to come down and surprise Penny and my mom for thanksgiving. Everyone was at my mom's house for dinner. We walked in the back door and I remember Penny standing there with a bowl of mashed potatoes and my mom at the sink. I said "Hi Mom" and she was so shocked and Penny almost dropped the bowl. It was a great reunion and everyone was excited to see me and I was excited to see my new family.

Summer of 1982 Penny and Margaret drove up and spent almost 2 weeks with us. My dad was still alive and he and my mom talked a lot. It was a great time. We got to know one another and went to different sights around Washington. I was so happy to know my sister and mom. Even though Penny and I were far apart in miles, I felt very close to her and got to know my birth family. I am so lucky to have had Penny as a sister, there was love there from the beginning between her and I. [Rod] I can't believe you two were together 35 years! She had such a full life, but a much happier one with you than her life in the states.



Coming to the UK

In 1981 Penny married Larry Parks who was in the U.S. air force at the time and was subsequently posted to England in 1982. Penny had always wanted to visit England so was happy for the opportunity to come over with Larry. It also gave her an opportunity to get away from the searing heat of Northern California where it could get up to 120° in the summer.





Penny and Larry lived in Felixstowe, a coastal town in Suffolk, initially in a flat above John Ives shoe shop on the High Street, where she met with someone who was to become a lifelong friend and interpreter – Katie Cox. Ironically, a few years later Katie and her husband Geoff moved to the U.S. as Geoff had been head-hunted for a job over there.



Why interpreter? There is the phrase that America and the UK are separated by a common language. During 1983/1984, Penny's daughter Angel spent a year over here living with Penny, and for a while worked at a restaurant in Felixstowe called "Nuts & Honey". Penny used to go and pick her up at the end of the evening when Angel finished work. On this particular occasion both Penny and Angel were feeling a bit down, as Angel's time over here was coming to an end. To cheer them up the owner of the restaurant said to them as they left "Keep your peckers up!" Initially both Penny and Angel were quite shocked and then burst out laughing as, in America, the term "Pecker" refers to an entirely different part of the anatomy. At least it meant that they managed to leave smiling, and in better spirits.

Whilst over here Penny worked as a layout artist for a small publication and later as an advertising salesperson for a small magazine. She could also satisfy her love of dogs by getting Shardan, an Afghan hound.



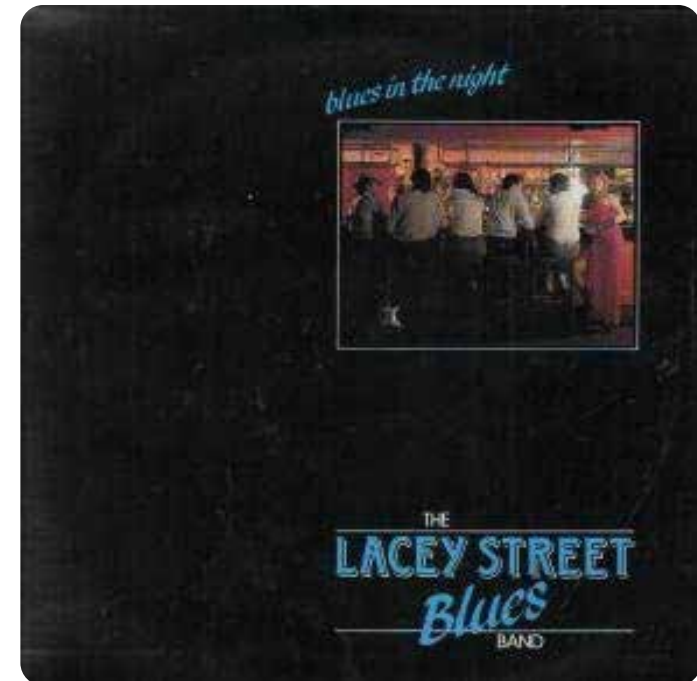
Penny the Vocalist

Penny's early singing days were spent with a contemporary gospel group touring Northern California. Later, turning fully towards secular music, she sang with a band working in a popular California dinner house performing middle of the road and country and western material. However, her keen interest in jazz and blues drew her to perform some of the classics in several cabaret shows before her departure to England.

When Penny saw an advert for a band wanting a new vocalist she jumped at the opportunity, that band was The Lacey Street Blues Band. She went for an audition, and was immediately accepted.



Shortly after joining the band cut an album – Blues in the Night – which was widely played by Radio Caroline at that time.

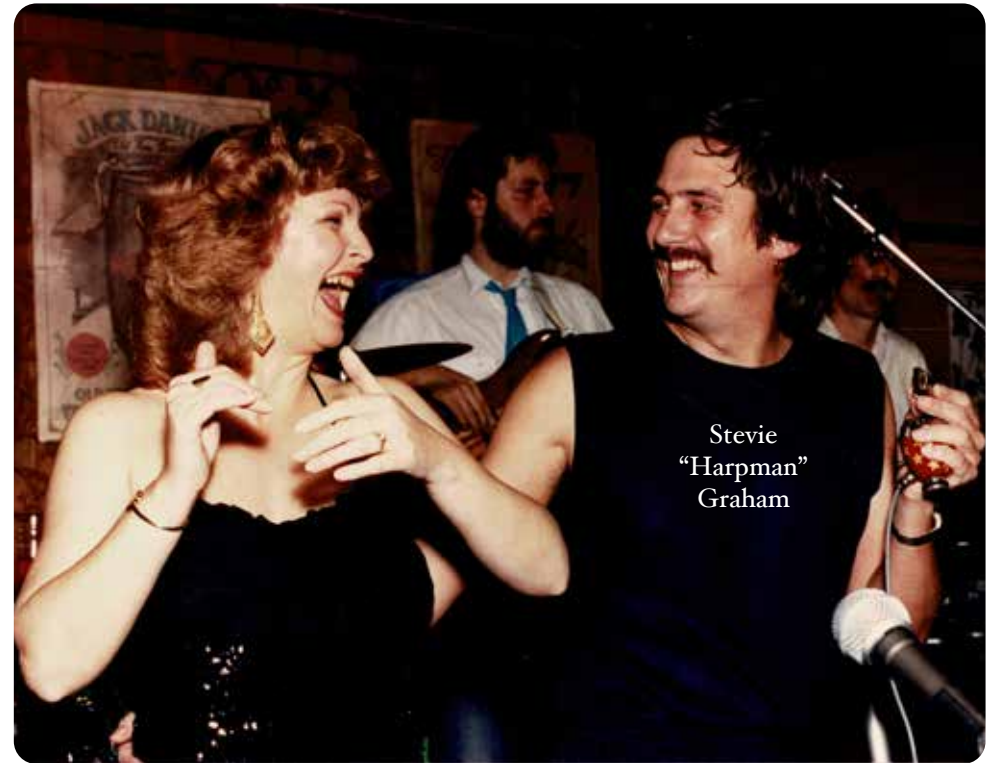


At that time, myself and a bunch of friends used to regularly go out and see the various blues bands that played in the area, amongst them were – Pete Croft, Turnham Green, Butchers Block and, of course, The Lacey Street Blues Band. We would often chat with the band members during the interval and afterwards - or at least my friends would as they were more talkative than myself. After these nights out we would often finish off by going back to my place for “tea and stickies” – a cup of tea and sticky buns.



Penny's marriage to Larry Parks was not the best fit. Although Larry provided Penny with some security, Larry himself was an insecure person which reflected in him being uptight, controlling, and seemingly devoid of humour. Characteristics that were the polar opposite to those of Penny, and as a consequence, they separated and filed for divorce in 1984, and Penny went to lodge with Stevie Graham, the harmonica player, at his house in Lacey Street, Ipswich – where the band originally got its name from.

I first met Penny at the Thrasher Pub in Ipswich on a night out with my usual gang. She was with her daughter Angel who was staying over here for a year. At one point they went into the ladies together and could then smell something awful – like dog poop. Penny thought that one of them must have picked something up on their shoe, so Angel checked her shoes one by one and couldn't see anything and then Penny checked hers – leaning on Angel as she did so. As she got closer to Angel to lean on her Angel exclaimed – “Its your breath!”. Apparently lager and Penny do not mix very well and made her breath



smell like dog poop. That was the last time Penny drank lager. Fortunately I hadn't been close enough to her to notice.

Penny it seemed was not good with either alcohol or other “mind altering” substances. Some years earlier when Penny was living in America, she had decided to throw a party for her friends. As the evening approached, Penny was getting quite stressed so was offered a smoke on some marijuana to relax her. This turned out not to be such a good idea, as instead of relaxing her it had a rather Jekyll and Hyde response and she became very angry and abusive – upsetting all of her guests in the process. That was the first - and last - time Penny tried any such substances.

One Saturday evening, the 2nd March 1985, my friends and I went out to see Butchers Block playing at the Fludyer Arms in Felixstowe. We were surprised to see Penny there as well, just as a member of the audience rather than up on stage. It was one night when Lacey Street were not playing. During the interval she chatted with us until it was time for the band to go back on for their second



set. We then turned our attention to the music. We happened to be standing near a door and Penny wanting to get out of the way of people coming in and out backed away from it and into me, expecting me to move back and give her space. Whilst I did back up, I also put my arm around her waist. Penny immediately thought “uh-oh - he’s gotten the wrong message – now how do I get out of this without offending him”. She apparently thought about it for a moment, but then thought – “actually, this feels rather good” and we stood there.

Behind her I was desperately trying to down the pint I had in my other hand so that I could get rid of the glass and put my other arm around her. Having downed my pint, I signalled to my friend Hugh who was with us to take my glass. He thought I was asking him to get me another pint – which he promptly did – so my plan was thwarted, but Penny and I stood like that for most of the second set. At some point I think Penny excused herself to go to the ladies room, but came back. At the end of the evening I invited her to join us for our customary tea and stickies back at my place. After explaining what “Stickies” were, she thought about it for a moment and then said yes. My gentlemanly intention was to run her home afterwards, and she was thinking that as she knew us she wouldn’t come to any harm and if she felt uncomfortable would make her way home anyway. So, we all went back to my house.

The following day, Penny asked me how old I was, I said to her that I was 29. At which Penny exclaimed something along the lines of “Oh my God”, as she hadn’t realised that I was quite so young – she was 41, 12 years older than me. I quickly explained that I would be 30 in three weeks – which amused Penny, as if that was going to make a whole lot of difference to our age gap. In my favour was the fact that I had always been old for my years - I had an aunt that apparently called me an old man when I was just 2 years old.

After around a couple of weeks of seeing each other, she asked me one evening as to whether this was a serious relationship for me or whether it was just a fling. I replied that I would have to think about it. Penny’s heart immediately sank – thinking “Oh just another wasted relationship – he will have fun for a while and then ditch me”. Approximately 30 seconds later I said “OK”. She then asked me what I meant, and I said something along the lines of “OK, this is serious for me”. I think Penny then realised that I was what she would later refer to in her therapy as a “fast processor” – I processed information and made decisions on it quickly and fully committed to it. I then asked her to move in with me, and that was the start of, and commitment to, the rest of our lives together - in sickness and in health – ‘til death us do part.

There was one moment though when Penny wondered if this relationship was good idea. It was the time when she went up to the bedroom to find that I had left my horse whip on the bed, and she wondered what she had gotten herself into. Suffice to say that she was relieved to find that it was a joke and just my warped sense of humour, and she breathed a sigh of relief.

On the flip side though I did make her cry when one evening she looked out of the bedroom window to see me in the garden punching a 2 x 4 wooden post (my “makiwara”). She asked what I was doing and I explained that in my karate practice I punched the post to crack the surface of the bones in my knuckles so that they would callous over and get stronger and harder. She didn’t like the idea of that as it made her sad seeing me hurt myself, so I had to give that up. What we do for love, hey!

Later that year, 1985, Penny and I were very privileged to be invited to the wedding of my very good friend Robin to Toshiko in Japan - my spiritual home. It was a wonderful experience and the trip of a lifetime – one we were very grateful to be able to go on. Penny sang at the reception and also sang karaoke with Toshiko's older brothers Masefumi and Takeyumi.



I was very proud to be able to show off this glamorous, talented lady as my partner.



After Penny moved in with me she said that she would start to look for a proper job doing secretarial work or whatever she could get. Instead, I encouraged her to get a therapy practice going. She started by going on a counselling course in order to attain UK counselling qualifications to which she added her own methods that she had developed for her own self-recovery, and so started what would eventually become Parks Inner Child Therapy (PICT).

Although Penny worked with adults, rather than children, Penny was contacted by a teacher at a school in Ipswich who had a troubled pupil that she wished Penny to see. The teacher, Pamela, and pupil duly came round to ours for a session and this was the start of another lifelong friendship. Pamela trained as a therapist herself, and subsequently worked with Penny in helping develop and train others in PICT for a number of years.

Penny's divorce from Larry was finally granted in August 1986, but another problem arose in that her permission to stay in this country was no longer valid and due to expire. So we got on the case to get her permission for permanent residence. This involved trips to the Home Office and dealing with the Immigration service. Fortunately, we managed to get two good allies on board – our local MP – John Gummer – who was very helpful, and a local immigration officer based at Felixstowe – Brian Lammiman. Brian was a larger than life figure in many ways – he could have been the brother of another Brian - Brian Blessed – very similar in both looks and mannerisms. Brian had a very significant attribute which was a major factor in our favour – he was a great Blues fan, and a fan of Penny's in particular. After a lot of comings and goings and lots of paperwork, Penny was eventually granted indefinite leave to stay in the UK. Sadly, Brian is no longer with us.

In the meantime, on the music front, I took on both the sound engineering and management of the band and we took on another member – Earl Howard as a saxophonist. What we didn't know when first taking on Earl is that he had an amazing voice. With both Earl and Penny fronting the band it went from strength to strength. We went back in the studio to record four demo tracks: Phone Booth Blues, My Girlish Days, Help me Through the Day and River Deep Mountain High. All four of these tracks (along with many others) are available to listen to on Penny's website : www.pennyparks.uk/singer.

The track Help Me Through the Day showcases how well Penny and Earl worked together.





Quite early on in the band's career, and before I took on doing the sound engineering for them, they were asked to perform at the Riverside Theatre in Woodbridge. At the time I had access to some video gear and thought that it would be a good opportunity to do a video recording of them. I setup on the balcony at the back of the theatre. That recording turned out to be a very good lesson in how **not** to play on a large stage – particularly when played back at fast speed. The band had setup as they would in a pub, in a tight group in the middle of the stage, instead of spreading out and using the full stage. It was particularly amusing at double speed to see Penny singing away going around in a tight circle with Stevie Graham beside her on Harmonica going backwards and forwards. At the end of the gig, instead of going off stage they just stood there milling around not knowing quite what to do – waiting for a call to do an encore – which they got. It was a very good learning curve which they took on board and subsequently were able to successfully play and work large stages such as the Corn Exchange in Ipswich.

The band went from strength to strength and had a great following and were a sought after band by venues. The band got on the circuit of performing at R.A.F. and American air force bases around the country. Although they paid

relatively well, the main downside of these gigs was that the personnel there didn't want live music, they just wanted disco, so were not that friendly towards the performers that dared to play at those venues. Apparently they had to book a diverse range of acts to go along whether they were wanted or not. The general rule was to play one set, get booed off and then go home but with a full night's pay. In that respect it was a relatively easy gig to do.

Penny got wise to this, and at one particular gig this guy walked up from the audience part way through a number she was singing and handed Penny a note. Penny opened the note which said something along the lines of "F Off". Fortunately, Penny was very good at handling this sort of thing and simply smiled sweetly at the person as he walked back to his seat and blew him a kiss. Of course, everyone else then wondered what it was he had written in the note – a good example of how to make heckling backfire.

Penny also had a stock of good one liners for rowdy drunkards in the audience, such as "I remember when I had my first beer too". Although later when Penny was singing with 56 Cadillac we did get some strange reactions from one or two audience members at gigs in Leiston whereby they would drop their trousers and bare their backsides at the band. We simply put it down to something in the air there from being in relatively close proximity to Sizewell Nuclear Power Station.

One of the venues that the band played at was a wine bar in Chelmsford. The only downside of that venue was it was a bit tight for space and the band had to cram together quite tightly. Penny launched into the song "Need Your Love So Bad" with the opening line: "I need some hands", when this hand came around her waist and pulling back on her. She wondered what was going on until she realised that behind her Earl had tripped on his saxophone stand and had reached out and grabbed Penny to stop himself falling over backwards.

Unfortunately, however, for the band, all good things come to an end. The bass player just started playing louder and louder leading to everyone else turning up to hear themselves - not only destroying the professionalism and sound of the band but causing increasing friction within the band which eventually broke it. It came to a head at a gig at the Oliver Twist pub in Colchester where the band was so loud on stage that most of the audience had their fingers in their ears, and I couldn't do anything about it, so after that gig I left the band, shortly followed by Penny. The band continued for a short while with Earl fronting the band on his own. Unfortunately, Earl suffered from asthma and taking on the



whole burden of fronting the band proved too much for him, he had a severe asthma attack at a gig and sadly passed away at that gig (aged only 39). A sad loss of an immense vocal talent.

A few years later the remaining members of the band (minus the person that had been responsible for the break-up) held a one-off reunion gig at the Earl Roberts pub in Ipswich. It was completely packed out, so much so that the landlady had to send out for extra beer barrels three times during the evening.

During this time, Penny was approached by the Pale Moon Big Band to perform a couple of numbers with them at a concert at the Spa Pavilion in Felixstowe. This was the first time Penny had had a full “Glenn Miller” style band behind her and she enjoyed it very much and sang two songs: Summertime (her signature song) and The Lady is a Tramp, both of which went down very well.

1987 saw the birth of two grandchildren – “little” Angel born to Dolly, followed later in the year by Ryan born to “big” Angel.



On a visit to the UK by Little Angel with her mother a couple of years later, she decided to try on granddad's shoes.



Having gained indefinite leave for Penny to stay in the UK we were considering moving (back) to America with me finding work over there. To do that, I would need to be married to Penny, so in preparation, in August 1989 Penny and I got married. With Penny having been married unsuccessfully twice before Penny was a little wary of making a big thing of it, so we had a quick registry office wedding on the morning of the 9th August. It was a Wednesday morning and we had been told that we needed two witnesses, so Penny got a couple of her friends to attend (one of them an ex-Bond girl – Molly Peters – think Thunderball and massage with a Black Mink Glove), the other was a barrister.



To Dear Penny with
much love Mollie x x

The four of us turned up at Ipswich Registry office at 11:00am for the ceremony with Penny buying a wedding ring on the way. We did the business, after which I went back to work, Penny went for a coffee with Molly, and the other witness went off to London.

That was our wedding – not the most romantic of occasions but just what Penny wanted. For us, it was simply something that needed to be done to achieve a goal, we were already committed to being together, to our relationship. Anyway, isn't there some statistical inverse correlation that the more extravagant the wedding the less likely it is to last? We don't even have any wedding photographs. For Penny and I the most important date was, and always has been, the 2nd March – the anniversary of the day we got together – and that was the anniversary we celebrated.

New Additions

The following month we added another new member to the family. Noodle, or as she became to be known – Noodle the wonder dog - although her kennel name was "Camboalto Princess". She was a Bolognese, a rare breed, and she was from the second litter of two born in this country by one of only 6 known breeders in the world at that time. Dogs have always been a big part of both Penny's and my own life and it seemed right to have one in our life again now. These Bolognese are fabulous dogs - they don't smell, and don't moult, they are great companion dogs and highly intelligent. Penny had seen the breed when leafing through a book on dog breeds, and these traits particularly appealed to her. They apparently used to belong exclusively to the Medici family in the height of the Renaissance period from the 15th to 17th century, and the only

way for anyone to acquire one was by being gifted one through doing the family a favour. They can be seen in pictures of the Medicis during that period. When the Medicis fell from grace the sailors used to take the dogs on-board their ships as they are apparently good ratters.



We were lucky to have stumbled on them just when a breeder brought them into this country and started to breed them. Unlike most other dog breeds Bolognese only have two pups at any one time, and hence part of the reason why they are a rare breed. Penny contacted the breeder to see what the likelihood was of having a puppy and what price they were. The breeder said that he was expecting a litter in a few months and the price of a puppy would be £2500. Shocked, Penny said that the price was rather more than she expected. The breeder then asked Penny what she was hoping to pay and Penny rather embarrassed said meekly £250 - at which the breeder, understandably, was not too impressed. However, a few months later when the next litter was born the breeder got in touch as the mother had accidentally bitten off half of the tail of one of the puppies and therefore could not be sold as a show dog. Consequently he was willing to sell it to us for the reduced price of £250 - it was obviously meant to be.

As Noodle grew up it was obvious that she was something special and highly intelligent. If you said something to Noodle, she would look at you, then look up as if reading your “think bubble” and then go off and do what she thought you asked of her. When Penny was either counselling clients or training students Noodle would always be in the room on her bed in the corner. On one occasion when Penny was with a client, the client had a tearful moment, and unusually, Noodle jumped out of her bed and onto the client’s lap. Penny was horrified, but at the end of the session when Penny asked her usual question of the client “What was the most significant feature of this session?” the client responded “When Noodle jumped on my lap - it was just what I needed at that moment”.

On another occasion when Penny was teaching a cohort of students, they broke for lunch and on their return Penny had written a list of instructions on the flip chart and asked the students to read the instructions and then they would break up into groups to work on it. Noodle promptly got out of her bed, sat in front of the flip chart and read the instructions with her head going back and forth. Everyone burst into laughter, much to the consternation of Noodle who obviously thought she was just doing what she had been told.



Four years after getting Noodle we thought that she might like the company of another dog, so we got our second Bolognese, Pickles (Camboalto Snowflake). We got her from another breeder who had taken over the breeding of the breed in the UK and Pickles was actually the niece of Noodle. However, this was a mistake, as Noodle had been an “only child” she resented the intrusion and attention given to another. Apart from one incident, they eventually settled down into a relationship where Pickles adored Noodle and looked up to her (ignoring us) but Noodle tended to ignore Pickles.

Noodle lived to the grand old age of 17 and eventually in 2006 we had to have her put to sleep. The vet came and we sat in the garden together whilst Noodle slipped away on Penny’s lap. When I went back into the house I happened to look at the clock in the kitchen which had stopped at the exact moment Noodle left us - and has never worked since. Pickles lived 17½ years and we said goodbye to her in the same way as Noodle in 2010.

Both Penny and I said that after the trauma of losing our beloved dogs we would not have any more. However, two years later Penny felt like she wanted another, so in late 2011 she started contacting breeders to check out whether they had any puppies for sale and what price they were. At that time none of them had any available but at least the price, had there been any, would have been around £1500.

In February 2012 Penny had a call from a breeder near Bristol to say that she had 7 Bolognese, and the youngest bitch, a 2 year old, had started fighting with her main breed and show bitch and that she needed to find a new home for this young bitch - would we be interested. We immediately made arrangements to go and visit her as soon as possible. We drove down, we loved the dog (then named Abi), the breeder liked us, and Penny agreed a price with her of £500 and we brought the dog back with us. Another case of it was just meant to be.

Having been used the name Pickles (or Pix for short) we kept mis-calling this new dog and having to correct ourselves - eventually we found it easier to rename her Pixi - which we think was more suitable for her anyway. So, we had a gained a fully house-trained dog without all of the hassles and messes of puppy-hood and for a more affordable price. Pixi was, and has been, a great comfort to both Penny and myself particularly over the last years and months of Penny’s life, and a great comfort to me since, and we stick to each other like glue – or perhaps it is the Velcro effect of body hair – not sure which.



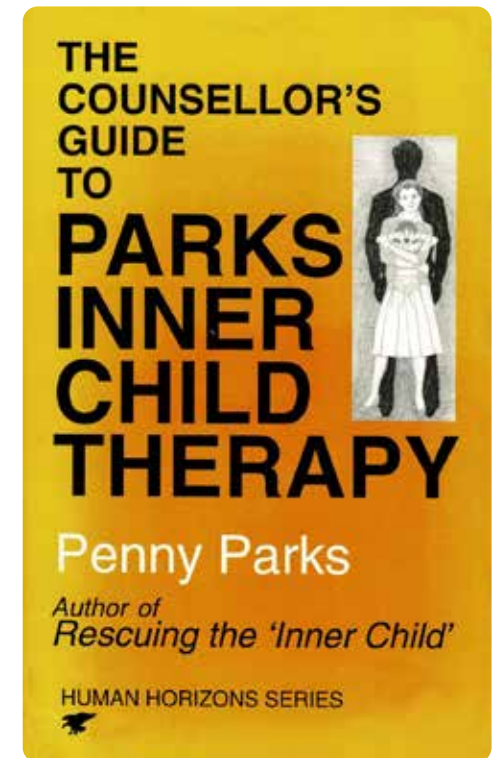
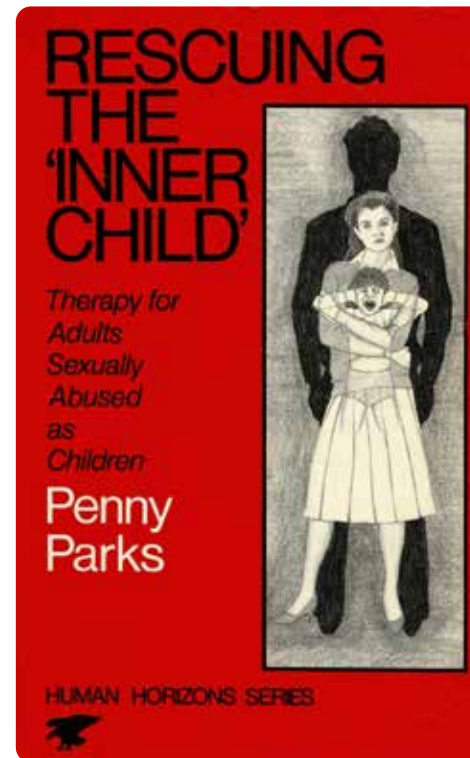
Pixi

The following year (1990) we took a trip to America to see the family and grandchildren and to check out opportunities. It was not a successful trip as the American economy was going through a downturn and there were many migrants in my line of work from the south of California, L.A. in particular, moving north to seek work, and northern California is where we wanted to be. So, we decided to stay put in the UK.



During this time Penny had been writing her first book. She wrote it all out in long-hand and then gave it to one of our neighbours – Elaine Bothello who was originally from Shreveport, Louisiana and worked on Bentwaters Airbase at the time, she kindly spent hours typing it all up on computer. Penny sent the manuscript off to a number of publishers, and got it snapped up relatively quickly by Souvenir Press in 1990.

Of all of the many things that I have done in my life, the most important to me is in giving Penny the opportunity and support in developing PICT.



Penny acknowledged this through the dedication that she put in her first book – which I treasure:

*To Dolly & Angel –
my beloved daughters, cherished friends, kindest critics and valued supporters –
I love you.*

*To Rod –
My loving husband, loyal and supportive friend, financial backer and respected
adviser – you are the treasure I thought I would never find.*

She wrote her second book four years later. This time I borrowed a computer from work, an Amstrad 1640 that ran on a floppy drive – remember those? That book was also snapped up by Souvenir Press. Both books are still in print today and are required reading in all good psychotherapy courses.

Those books have helped so many people around the world and it wasn't until she started getting fan mail from as far away as Venezuela and South Africa that she fully realised the reach and effectiveness of the work that she had created.

WOMEN IN ANGLIA with Carolyn Bramble

Concern over growing cases of incest

Helping victims of sex abuse inside the home

BY THE age of 12 Penny Parks was no stranger to sex — it was love she found difficult to understand.

Since she was a toddler six different men had sexually abused her — the most common was a close member of her family.

But it was years before the American girl realised there was anything wrong about what was happening to her.

"I thought everyone did it. When I realised it was a horrible thing I was not happy about it. But he told me I had better not tell because no-one would believe me and I would go to jail," she said.

Finally she summoned the courage to tell her mother. Crying to the point of hysteria, she uttered the difficult words. "My mother shook me and shouted at me that I was a liar." It was easier for Penny to say she was lying.

Courage

And of course her tormentor said, "I told you nobody would believe you". She never told anyone again.

Instead, when the youngster learned the facts of life, and realised the danger of becoming pregnant, she took matters into her own hands.

HORRIFIC tales of child abuse have been hitting the headlines more and more over the past year or so. A recent television programme revealed that 86,000 sex offenders are currently roaming the streets of Britain.

Children who are abducted, sexually abused, and often killed, spark off angry reactions in every family. It is all too easy to hate the strangers, but what about the sexual assaults that go on behind the closed front door?

Concern is growing over the cases of incest that are coming to light. In some areas of the country the figures are alarming. What can be done to protect our children?

"Some people never have a normal, healthy sex life. They are unable to have sex at all, or limited sex. Some are very promiscuous but get no enjoyment — it's just something they do because they were used as a child and are desensitised to it."

Then there is the confusion over love, because it was someone they loved who abused them. "You question anyone who says they love you, sure they will find out what a horrible person you really are. Yet you desperately want someone to love you. It's Catch 22."

Now Penny, who lives in Trimley St Mary, is using her knowledge to help other people by counselling them for the Incest Crisis Line. She also gives talks locally, specially to professional groups, and hopes to set up a support group in the area.

"Very few people have a totally healthy emotional life without some sort of counselling," she said.

Having worked both here and in America as a counsellor, Penny has come across some moving cases. The unprintable tales she has to tell are very distressing.

"We look up to our parents as gods when we are small. It is very difficult for a small child to understand this god-like person is doing something confusing — a bad thing. But it's the betrayal of trust that is most damaging and remains with them."

The problems can manifest themselves in all sorts of ways, such as phobias, sexual and emotional problems.

"One of the problems in childhood is that you feel the only person it is happening to, and very isolated. It helps to know that other people

have come through it. It's also common to feel that you were guilty of some sort of wrong — you have got to know that everybody feels that way."

Frightening

"I have to get across to women who have had the experience that the things done to them are not bad. It's the fact they are done by an adult to a child that is bad."

"People always ask, 'Why do men do this?'. There is no pat answer. It is often men with low self-control — low self-esteem. They turn to children because they have power over them — children are fairly easily intimidated," she said.

Her statistics are frightening too — 85 per cent of men who sexually assaulted children were sexually assaulted themselves. "We



Penny Parks — using her knowledge to help and comfort other victims of incest.

need to stop a family inheritance," she stressed.

Penny is also very keen to explode the myths that

surround incest and child sex abuse. It is a myth, she says, that the most common aggressor is a stepfather — the number one candidate is a

more discussion is one of the answers to stopping the problem. That is one of the reasons she gives talks, to make people more aware of

FRI APR 27, 1990 Evening Star

Penny brings her ghost to book



Penny Parks relaxes at her Trimley home with Noodle, her puppy, and the book which is about to arrive in the shops.
Picture by JOHN KERR.

ONE way of blotting out bad memories is to tuck them away at the back of your mind and pretend they never happened.

"But that is only a short-term solution, and life has a way of dredging bad things back to the surface when you least can cope with them."

These words belong to someone who knows only too well how the past won't leave you alone.

Penny Parks has come to terms with her past — a childhood in which she was badly sexually abused.

Now she can live happily with the knowledge that it will not cause her any more hurt.

And in addition to her work as an abuse consultancy therapist, Penny has written a book to help other victims lay their ghosts to rest.

"It is a self-help book, one which will help guide abuse victims through the

By LYNN ABBOTT

ordeal of coming to terms with the traumatic events that are holding them back from leading a normal, happy life.

"But for some, the book will not help them, without extra counselling."

The book — "Rescuing The Inner Child" — was written after Penny realised that the unique therapy she used on herself, and others, helped adults who were abused as children.

Hang-up

"Every adult has a child part within them, and if the child was abused, it must be the child who can tell its adult mind what is causing their hang-up." Penny went through her early adult life trying to combat the guilt she felt for things she had been subjected to.

"I felt, as all abused people feel, that

they are to blame for what happened to them.

"We had no choice in the acts we were involved in, but somehow we still feel to blame."

Her book, like her self-styled therapy, encourages adults to write to themselves as though they were still a child.

The experiences of the "inner child" reminds the adult of what went wrong and they then can start to accept the past.

The victim is encouraged to write a letter, as a child, to the adult they have become, or to the person who abused them.

"When I tried this out on myself, I thought, 'What have I done?' I really opened up a can of worms and didn't know what to do next."

"So I then called on the adult in me to help. After all, I had gone this far and had nothing more to lose."

Penny's do-it-yourself therapy helped her find herself and made her into a "worthwhile human being".

But Penny added, "You will never forget, but you can stop hurting."

Each memory that comes to the surface will hurt at the time, but once it has been relived, becomes "de-sensitised".

Rubble

"I can now live my life with all my treasured memories because I have thrown away all the rubble."

In her book, Penny has used excerpts from her clients' "inner child" memories.

Some contain graphic child-like drawings, many illustrating all too clearly why their experiences were so horrific.

So how does this Californian grandmother, now living in Trimley St. Mary, get away from the traumas of

helping her clients relive painful memories?

"I spend time with my husband and little dog Noodles, and sing with a band to let off steam."

Penny sings with "Ruby Red" — formerly called The Lacey Street Blues Band — and describes her style of singing as a "cross between Tina Turner and Mae West".

"Singing is a perfect opportunity to use excess energy and a chance to be an extrovert. I love it."

She will be flying out to visit her daughters and grandchildren in California "for a well-earned holiday" shortly after her book is in the shops.

"The book has taken over two years to come to reality, and now all of a sudden this is a really exciting time for me."

"Seeing all my efforts in print, and a trip home — all this and a wonderful life. What more could a woman ask?"

After publication of her books, Penny was invited on a number of TV and radio programmes and did some work with Esther Rantzen and ChildLine.

I think that you will agree that this is quite an achievement for someone with Penny's background and such a fragmented schooling.

It is unfortunate though that the medical establishment in this country is less receptive to anything new, let alone anything that works, so to get PICT accepted as a mainstream form of therapy was, and still is an issue. The head of the local social services seemed to be particularly obstructive at the time, despite the excellent support and backing that Penny had from the head psychiatrist at St Clements in Ipswich.

One example of this resistance is told by a student of Penny's who worked for a psychiatrist in a UK hospital. The psychiatrist went away for a holiday and asked this student to look after his patients while he was away. During this time the student decided to use **just one** of the tools of PICT on these patients. A few days after the psychiatrist returned from holiday he came into the office of the student and furiously slammed down the patient files of the patients he had asked the student to look after and said: "How dare you cure my patients". As far as the psychiatrist was concerned the patients had been cured, although only having received a small part of what PICT can offer its recipients. Unfortunately, though it is also typical of the jealousy within the medical profession of tools that actually work and do so effectively.

I think that is one of the reasons why the song "Arrogance, Ignorance and Greed" that Penny later sang with her band White Dog resonated so strongly with her.

Penny was always learning new things and as a result, continually tweaking and updating the model using the latest and most advanced technology she could find to become not just the only therapy model that actually resolves the issues of childhood abuse but making that resolution as quickly and painlessly as possible. She trained in NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) eventually attaining the level of Master Trainer. This enabled her to radically change PICT from the original letter writing model to one utilising Imagery Re-scripting which sped up the process significantly. It was also a therapy model that did not require the client to relive the past experiences.

I remember the time that Penny had a new prospective client call her who said: "I know that I have to go through and relive the trauma of the past, but every time I do so I just burst into tears am a complete mess and cannot get past it. Would you be able to help me relive it and get past it without becoming a complete wreck?" Penny's answer was "No, I can't help you do that". She did however go on to say: "What I can do though is help you resolve your issues **WITHOUT** having to relive the past experiences". Needless to say, the client was amazed, signed up immediately, and subsequently came for therapy where she was able to resolve her issues, and get on with her new life.

That release from victim-hood and the chance of a new and better life is what Penny was able to provide through her therapy. Two rather sad stories were one where a 60+ year old woman came to Penny for therapy and on completion said that she wished she had been able to come years ago, she felt that she had wasted so much of her life unsuccessfully trying to live with the trauma of her abuse. Another was a man who had been in "therapy" for seven years without any form of resolution, came to Penny and within a very short space of time, got the resolution he was seeking.

A stark indication of the power of PICT to change people's lives and to do it painlessly and quickly.

Originally the therapy model took the form of a monthly session over a period of 6 months. However, Penny was increasingly being approached by people overseas for therapy. Consequently, she trialled and developed a version which could be applied over 5 days of 20 hours of intensive therapy of 4 hours per day. This she called her "Quick Change" format. It was not suitable for all clients and would need clients to undergo a rigorous prior interview to ensure that they could handle it and that it would be suitable.

1992 saw the birth of the third grandchild, Dolly's son Vincent followed in 1993 with another son, Chris.



In that same year, 1993, we moved to Mount Pleasant – we were primarily looking for somewhere within 20 miles of Ipswich that was large enough and isolated enough where Penny could hold training courses and, if necessary, provide accommodation as well. We had been searching for two years before we came across this place for sale well off the beaten track. We arrived before the estate agent and looked around the 2½ acre garden and enjoyed the peace and quiet of the setting located as it was surrounded by fields on all sides and had its own wood at the end of the garden. We decided that this was the place for us before we had even looked inside the house. The inside of the house was a complete mess, and had not been looked after well - or even cleaned for what seemed like the last decade. It turned out that it was also rat infested. We moved in on the 18th December 1993 with Noodle and Pickles and set about cleaning it up and making it more habitable and suitable as a training venue.

Penny started training other counsellors in her methods, and eventually then had to train other trainers to train the counsellors, developing a core team of three trainers.

In the summer 1995 I started work on extending the kitchen which also entailed removing a room that had been (badly) built over it which had been used as a bathroom and had a rats nest in it. I dug the foundations of the new kitchen (by hand) and then took two weeks out from work to do the majority

of the building work, working all hours through the day and evening. It was a hot summer, so Penny had to bring me out quantities of water and food every 20 minutes to keep me hydrated and fuelled. Having laid the foundations and built the external walls I was getting ready to tackle the roof. It was a weekend that Penny had a training course going on, and I had been building a pile of rubble on top of the ceiling of the kitchen which unfortunately proved a bit too heavy for the ceiling to support. Just as Penny's students started arriving on the second day of her course the plasterboard of the kitchen ceiling gave way and the kitchen filled up with rubble and dust. So, the students had to go without refreshments that day.



Jazz singer Penny helps boost diabetes charity



AUDIENCE members were wowed at the California Club as jazz songstress Penny Parks treated them to a memorable performance.

The concert was in aid of Ipswich's Diabetes Centres and specifically Dose Adjustment for Normal Eating (DAFNE), raising a total of £480 for the charity.

American-born Penny lives in Debenham and counts the Dorchester hotel among the venues she has performed at. This was her first visit to the club in Foxhall Road and it was a huge success.

She said: "It all went very well and the jazz club have promised to donate the takings from their next raffle which



CONCERT: Singer Penny Parks, centre, with competition winner Theresa Buckland, right, and her friend Ann ???.

Picture: CONTRIBUTED

should push the final total over the £500 mark.

"I've been a diabetic for 40 years and last year had the opportunity to learn the DAFNE technique. It's a revolution-

ary approach to eating and made a huge difference to my life but is not covered by the NHS. I was so taken by it that I wanted to give more people the opportunity to do it."

Dr Gerry Rayman, director of Ipswich diabetes centre, was there on the night as well as a member of Penny's old band Lacey Street and the group have agreed to reform for another gig to raise even more funds for charity.

London-based blues veteran George Hooker provided a perfect guitar sound to compliment Penny's voice and there was even an impromptu performance from an audience member.

Penny said: "We had a gentleman from the audience come and join us on stage with his chromatic harmonica. We did some Billie Holiday and Eartha Kitt numbers and a few standards like Cry Me a River. We also threw in a few funny songs to keep everyone awake like Spike Milligan's version of I Could Have Danced all Night. I even sang Happy Birthday in the Marilyn Monroe style to David Southey who used to listen to Lacey Street and was celebrating his 50th."

The Star recently gave away two tickets for the concert and competition winner Theresa Buckland, from Rushmere St Andrew, was there to enjoy her prize.

She said: "It was a great prize to win and my friend Ann and I both had a very enjoyable evening. Penny was charming and had such a wonderful voice. It was very easy to listen to indeed."

■ Have you got a story from your neighbourhood in south east Ipswich. Contact Tom Potter on 01473 324801 or tom.potter@eveningstar.co.uk

In the meantime, Penny continued to sing. After Lacey Street folded, a few members of the band reformed as Ruby Red which lasted for a short while.

Penny then met up with George Hooker, whose wife Christine had been a student on Penny's course. George was a guitarist and bass player and they went out performing as a duo for a number of years. One of the many gigs they did was in support of a diabetes charity – an issue close to Penny's heart.



Penny & George - performing at a wedding

Around this time I was also doing the sound for a local Band – Hogs Kiss, which after losing one of the singers became 56 Cadillac, which Penny then joined.

In 2006 56 Cadillac, along with George & Christine and Penny's niece Carolyn all went out to Italy to do a gig there and spent a week playing music in and around a town in Italy – as well as having a bit of a holiday together. One of the venues that Penny and George performed at was a theatre without a roof perched on the edge of the town of Norma. Literally perched on the edge as on one side it was a sheer drop down the mountain. Although having no roof, it actually had great acoustics and Penny particularly enjoyed this performance.

On the return from this trip back to Stansted Airport, Penny's permission to stay in the UK was questioned (despite being married to me). So, Penny decided to apply for British Citizenship. This she duly acquired in December of that year, a process which required her to answer some "citizenship questions" which, quite frankly I suspect most of us would fail. Who knew that pocket money was apparently mandatory to give to children and was greater than the sixpence I used to get?

Eventually, all good things come to an end, and Penny was "bandless" for a while, but would occasionally hook up with Tony Mowles to do some work together. Eventually Steve Waller joined them and they became White Dog which Penny thoroughly enjoyed - whether doing actual gigs or simply rehearsing together.

She also looked forward to and greatly enjoyed the Stand and Deliver sessions at the local Leisure Centre Lounge Bar at the end of every month.

One aspect of working with Tony and Steve that she enjoyed was that they explored a lot of different songs to the blues and jazz standards that Penny used to sing. Songs such as Someone Like You (which in my view she did better than Adele), Arrogance, Ignorance & Greed by Show of Hands (mentioned earlier), Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen, Tennessee Whiskey by Chris Stapleton and Tower of Song.

As well as teaching and doing workshops for other therapists, Penny loved to learn new things herself and attended numerous conferences, courses and workshops to both increase her knowledge and her expanding set of qualifications. As the entrepreneur and motivational speaker, Jim Rohn said: *"Formal education will make you a living, self-education will make you a fortune."* Whilst Penny spent a lot of time on self-education, it didn't make her a fortune, but it enabled her to develop something that has become priceless to so many – the chance of a new life, and on many occasions saving lives.

One conference she attended that stood out in particular was a three day international conference. Although she was not speaking at this conference, word soon got around that Penny Parks herself was in attendance. She had numerous therapists from the UK and abroad coming up to her and saying: "I can't believe that I am actually meeting The Penny Parks". She told me all about this when she came back home. The following morning I took her up a

cup of tea and greeted her: “Morning The”. She looked at me strangely and then laughed realising what I was referring to.

Another course she went on was a one day workshop in Guildford. She went down the day before by train to stay over in a hotel that night so that she would be fresh in the morning to fully take in the course content. Unfortunately, she had also recently acquired a new expensive pair of varifocal glasses. As she was walking along Guildford High street from the train station to the hotel and, unable to judge the ground properly due to her new glasses, she misjudged her footing and plunged headlong onto the pavement. Fortunately a white knight appeared in the form of a young man in a white van who immediately pulled up beside her jumped out and helped her up. He took her into the sandwich shop outside of which she had fallen and got some blue catering plasters from the person behind the counter to patch up her grazed and bleeding forehead. He then walked with her the rest of the short distance to the hotel she was staying at and helped her through reception up to her room, and instructed the receptionist to check on her in an hour to make sure that she didn't have concussion. Penny then rang me to tell me what had happened and asked if I would come and pick her up the following day after the workshop as she didn't want to come home on the train.

Penny went to the workshop with a grazed and plastered forehead, the start of a black eye and twisted glasses. This particular workshop was being run by the police and the topic? “Battered Women”. So, you can imagine the scene as Penny walked in and had to reassure everyone that she was not a victim. However, I still got a few strange glances later on that day when I appeared to pick her up and take her home. Needless to say, she recovered well. She was very grateful to the good Samaritan that had stopped to help her so well and so thoughtfully and was encouraged to see such compassion in action and to be the recipient of it. As for the glasses – she ditched varifocals from then on.

I was always concerned when Penny went on public transport, particularly in the early days, before she had her own car. Due to her ability to quickly and easily build rapport and connect with others she would usually have a story of a new friend she had made or someone she had helped in one way or another. It got to the stage where when I got home from work I would ask her who she had picked up that day. There was one incident in May 2019 which epitomises this easy ability of Penny's to connect with and touch the lives of others. I often encouraged her to write these incidents down, and she did so with this one. It

is a true story, a relatively recent one and a fine example of how Penny so easily touched the lives of so many:

The Train Journey - Penny Parks, May 2019

I was returning by train from a psychotherapists weekend workshop in London. Sitting alone at a table seat, my heart sank as I realised that a staggering, dishevelled, very drunk man was going to sit with me. Damn, I thought, Sod's Law!

I had a load of paperwork laid out that I was closely examining, so I kept my head down and didn't even acknowledge his presence, hoping he would take the hint and leave me be. Alas, that didn't happen.

He was not aggressive, just loud, obviously upset and seemed on the verge of tears. He made a bit of a production getting out of his overcoat and folding it carefully on the seat next to him. He introduced himself to me and began spontaneously telling me his troubles, as though we had an appointment to do so.

He was a teacher who was facing an Ofsted evaluation the next day. He was terrified, vulnerable and had little hope of coming out alive. His extreme distress was palpable and I abandoned my paperwork to offer whatever assistance I could.

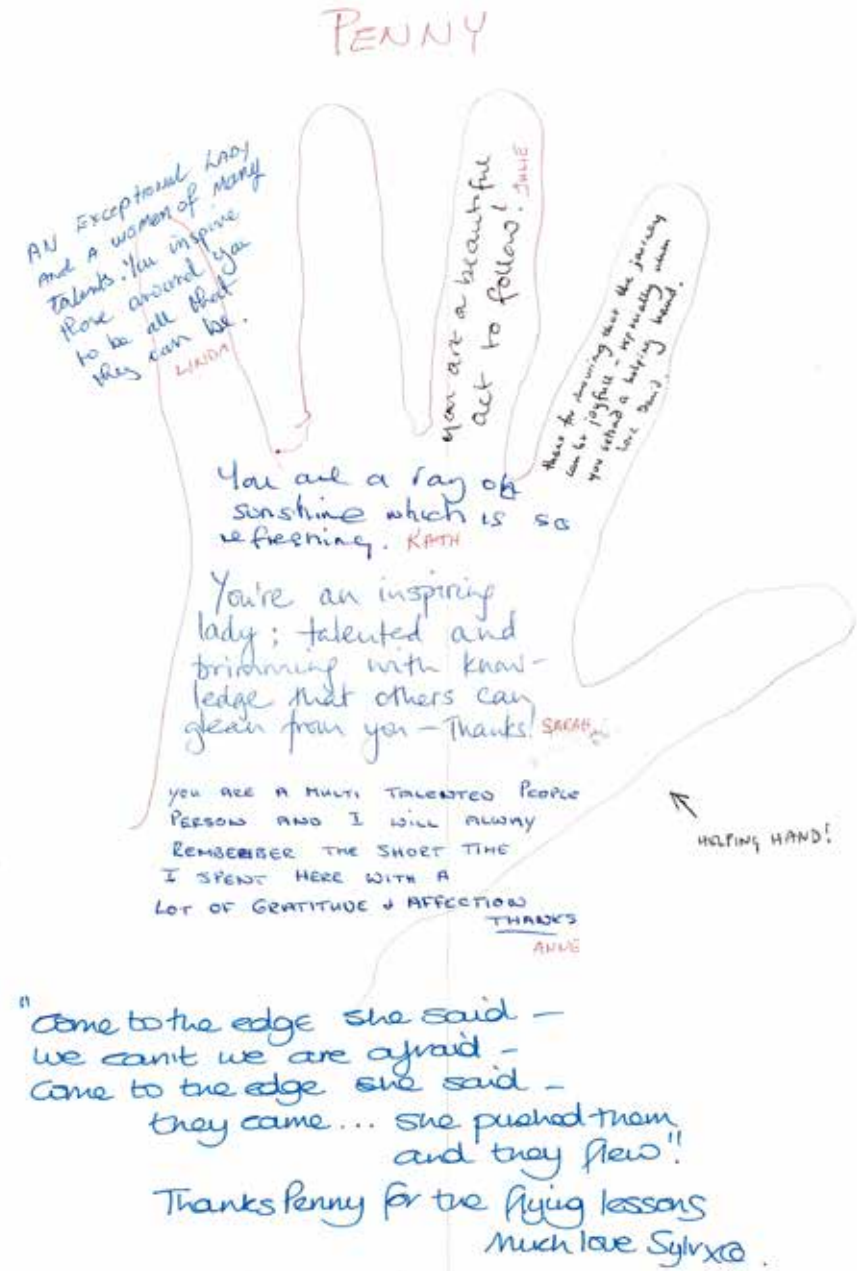
Surreptitiously, I began to use a psychotherapy tool I had developed that could efficiently bring people out of despondency and back to their natural state of being. I did it conversationally, so it wouldn't be obvious to him. I enjoyed the process of having to quickly think on my feet to adapt the tool to appropriately guide him.

I had never used the tool that way, but it worked a treat. You could actually see him coming out of his drunken state – through his posture, his speech, his comprehension level and the alertness in his eyes. When we came to the end of the process he was relaxed, smiling and began to tell me what positive things he planned to do in the morning Ofsted meeting.

He sat silently for a few minutes, thinking about what had transpired over the last hour. He then looked at me, slowly shook his head and said, ‘I don't know what you've done to me or how you did it...but you

have saved my life. I was seriously considering suicide tonight, but now I feel hopeful and positive. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.'

We were now at his destination, he collected his folded overcoat, shook my hand, then kissed it, smiled and we said goodbye. I don't think I've ever felt more alive or joyous, and I'm sure my feet didn't touch the ground on my way home.



Health Issues

In 2003 Penny, aged 60, discovered a lump in her right breast which was subsequently diagnosed as cancerous. She opted to have a lumpectomy – surgical removal of the lump itself. Unfortunately, after the surgery was completed, they realised that they had not removed enough of the lump with a sufficient margin around it, so she had to have a second surgery to make sure that they got everything. Penny opted not to have any radiotherapy or chemotherapy at that time as to us they both seemed counter-intuitive and most likely to cause more of a problem than be of any use.

Prior to the surgery we went to visit an “alternative” cancer specialist in Kent, and the first thing he told Penny was to give up consuming dairy products, which she did. I had been dairy free for a few years myself at that time, so it was easy to incorporate into Penny’s diet as well. It is now widely accepted that dairy products are effectively carcinogenic, particularly with hormonal based cancers such as breast and prostate cancer.

However, getting a dairy free diet and one suitable for a diabetic proved virtually impossible whilst she was in hospital having, and recovering from, the surgeries to remove the cancer. So, I would cook up her meals at home and then take them in to her in the hospital. Penny was so blown away by what I cooked up for her that she wanted me to write up a recipe book for cancer patients. It is only now, 18 years later, that I am finally putting that book “Cooking for Cancer” together.

In 2013, ten years after Penny’s first brush with cancer, she found another lump in the same breast. This time she opted to have a full mastectomy of that breast and again refused to have radiotherapy or chemotherapy on the grounds that they may potentially cause more harm than good.

Because Penny lived very much in the public eye due to both her teaching role in training students in her therapy model and as a popular singer she tried various fillers for her bra to make her appearance as normal as possible. However, nothing she tried seem to work very well or the filler would move just when she didn’t want it to. So, in 2014 Penny followed up the mastectomy by going to see a surgeon, privately initially, to discuss the possibility of reconstruction surgery. On examination, the surgeon diagnosed that Penny had a hernia in her abdominal wall that had been there from the pregnancy of her second daughter some 48 years earlier. The surgeon also went on to say that Penny qualified to have the surgery done under the NHS and that she would attempt to do the

breast reconstruction, hernia repair and tummy tuck all in one operation – a feat that she did manage to achieve and Penny was very happy with the result – life could get back to normal.

In 2015 Penny was diagnosed with the onset of macular degeneration - degeneration of an area of the eyes, which was naturally upsetting for someone who loved to read and watch TV. She immediately set about researching what alternative treatment options were available for this condition. She came across something called Saffron 2020 and promptly ordered a batch. About a year later when she went back for a check-up the optician could not find any evidence of the macular degeneration and put it down to a misdiagnosis in the first place (as the medical profession so often do when “alternatives” work where “proper” medicine fails to help).

Penny subsequently set about preparing for succession planning and was hoping to handover PICT to others to take on so that she could look forward to properly retiring and spending her time doing the things that she loved – her artwork, writing poetry and of course her singing. Unfortunately these plans were thwarted through successively being let down by those to whom she had hoped to take on the ongoing training and development of PICT as well as her deteriorating health.

In 2017 Penny was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis and started regular treatment for that. That year we also made a trip to America to spend time with Penny’s family. I was so concerned about Penny’s health at this time that I advised her daughters, Dolly & Angel, to make sure that they made the most of that visit as I felt that it may well be one of, if not the last time Penny may be able to make it over to America. I did not know just how right I would be.

In November 2018, Penny experienced a pain in her shoulder and initially thought that she may have pulled something, but it wouldn’t go away. As the pain persisted, she kept going back to the local doctor to try to get a proper diagnosis.

In February 2019 Penny saw one senior doctor at the local practice and specifically asked him if it was anything to do with her history of breast cancer. Without doing any proper examination or test he stated emphatically that it was not cancer related but could not give an answer as to what the problem actually was. In April we went again to see another doctor as by this time quite a lump had

developed just under the right collar bone. This young and more astute doctor actually bothered to look at Penny's history and was concerned that it may be linked to the breast cancer that Penny had previously experienced on that side, even though that breast had since been removed. Having carried out a proper, thorough check up, the doctor was also concerned about a pronounced heart murmur. He promptly made appointments at the hospital for an immediate biopsy as well as a full ECG and EKG.

After consultations and the biopsy at Ipswich Hospital, it was determined that some stem cells in Penny's chest (pectoral) muscle had turned into breast cells and become cancerous. As Penny had previously undergone a mastectomy on that side, she described it as her "no breast, breast cancer". At that time, it was thought that it might be possible to operate and remove the tumour. Since they do not carry out that type of surgery at Ipswich, they normally refer patients to Chelmsford. We asked if she could be referred to Norwich instead as Penny had previously undergone breast surgery there, and it is closer and easier for us to get to than Chelmsford. In the meantime, Penny was also getting further tests done to determine the cause of her heart murmur.

The following day Penny received a call from the local doctor that diagnosed the issue in May to say that the results had come back from the investigation into her heart murmur to advise that it was due to severe aortic stenosis, which is calcification of one of the main heart valves. This is a serious life-threatening condition which needed treating as soon as possible either by open heart surgery or by passing a replacement artificial valve up the femoral artery into her heart. Again, not the news we wanted to hear, particularly the day after the news about the cancer.

An urgent referral was sent off to Norwich Hospital by the cancer team at Ipswich Hospital and we waited for an appointment with the consultant there. A few days went by without hearing anything, so Penny rang to see what was happening. Apparently, her referral had been delivered to the wrong department. The secretary of the breast consultant that it should have gone to tracked it down and said that she would put it on the consultant's desk. A few more days went by and again having heard nothing Penny rang again. She was told that the referral was still in the wrong department, but it would be sorted. A few more days went by and again having heard nothing Penny rang again and was told off for trying to jump the queue in the waiting list as they thought that this was some routine problem not an urgent one. The team at Ipswich

Hospital were horrified by the delay of such an urgent issue. I immediately then emailed a complaint direct to the Chief Executive of Norwich Hospital who in turn immediately apologised and investigated. The following day (11th June) the head of surgery at the hospital rang me to apologise and make an appointment with the breast team to following morning.

On the 12th June, we went along to meet the team at Norwich which comprised the breast consultant, a plastic surgeon, who had been a part of the team that did the reconstruction of Penny's breast back in 2014 and a breast nurse. They advised that the tumour had now grown to such an extent where surgery was no longer an option as, by now, it had wrapped around the main blood vessel to the arm and was pressing on the main nerve to the arm, that was why Penny was getting so much pain in her arm and shoulder.

Penny was then referred to a cardiology consultant at Norwich and underwent further in-depth examination to determine the extent of the heart condition. Once that was completed, it was then up to the oncology and cardiology consultants to get their heads together to see which should be tackled first. Either way, the outlook was not looking good at that time, and she was now on a regular cocktail of heavy duty pain killers.

As it is highly inadvisable to carry out surgery whilst an active cancer is present, it was decided to try treating the cancer first, and Penny was put on a course of heavy-duty chemotherapy comprising two drugs that would be given intravenously every three weeks. This course of treatment started with the first infusion on the 24th July. This all went OK, however, one of the likely side effects of one these chemo drugs is hair loss - although not usually experienced until the second or third session. However, Penny's started falling out soon after the first dose. Penny found it irritating having to deal with the hair falling out everywhere, so she asked me to give her a "buzz cut" with my electric hair trimmer, and I gave her a "Number 2". She tried this for a few days and then asked me to cut it shorter, so I then gave a "Number 1". (I had been regularly dyeing her hair up to this time, so I was now becoming quite the hairdresser!) However, this shorter hair made things worse as she was then getting tiny hairs falling out which were more irritating than the longer hairs, a bit like itching powder, so I then shaved her head altogether. I got through three disposable razors in the process. She did get a couple of wigs, but for a while preferred to go about bald, that didn't bother Penny, and she even sang at a music night with it like that - receiving supportive cheers and applause.



In addition to all of this, Penny had been suffering from anaemia due to the treatment she had been receiving for Rheumatoid Arthritis over the preceding 18 months. This anaemia had been causing both tiredness and more recently breathlessness, so she was scheduled for two iron infusions and a blood transfusion which were given on successive Sundays over a three-week period. These helped quite a bit and she started to regain a bit more energy and reduced the breathlessness.

One of the complications of chemo treatment is that it compromises the immune system, so Penny is likely to get infections more easily. Consequently, it was necessary for me to keep her under close observation, taking her temperature and blood pressure on a regular basis throughout the day. On three occasions, usually last thing at night, Penny's temperature went up above the danger threshold, so I ended up having to rush her up to Norwich Hospital late at

night for anti-biotic infusions and overnight care. These were each diagnosed as Sepsis, potentially life-threatening conditions on their own, let alone everything else that was going on, but a common problem when taking chemotherapy. However, she was usually well enough to come out the following day.

On the 14th August we went in for her second session of chemo infusion. After about 10 seconds of starting the infusion Penny went into severe anaphylactic shock and respiratory arrest. Sitting next to her and seeing the light go out in Penny's eyes the thought went through my head "is this it? Is this how it ends?". Fortunately, the nurse administering the chemo was very experienced and she stopped the infusion immediately, called the crash team and took full charge. Within seconds a bed appeared which Penny was put on, and there were about 15 people around her – doctors, nurses, consultants, porters and security. I was taken to one side with a nurse to look after me and keep me occupied. Fortunately, they managed to revive Penny, and she was eventually taken to the acute medical unit for observation and monitoring. When it came to feeding



time she was so weak that I had to feed her. The staff said that they had never seen such a severe reaction and so quickly. The oncology consultant told me that she could no longer have chemo and that her options were now limited. Eventually I left to go back home but was surprised to hear the following day that she was deemed well enough to come back home. She seemed to make a remarkable recovery.

After a couple of weeks, we went back to see the oncology consultant who by then had had time to consider what options were left for Penny. He outlined three possible options, all of which were deemed to be risky to one degree or another. The option that seemed to be the least risky and most practical was to try her on some chemo tablets taken in three-week cycles of two weeks on and one week off, thereby spreading the dose intake.

Since the original diagnosis of cancer, I had been researching the best nutrition for Penny to fight cancer and with this latest incidence had put us both on a “Whole Food, Plant Based” diet – essentially a healthy vegan diet – no animal protein at all, as the evidence showed that animal protein intake promotes both the growth and spread of cancer. In addition, I included a number of supplements deemed to be beneficial for tackling the cancer, heart condition and anaemia.

On Friday the 6th September Penny had another rise in temperature, although it wasn't as severe as previous occasions, so I wasn't sure if it was sepsis or not. I decided this time to take her to Ipswich Hospital instead of trekking up to Norwich, although time-wise it is only about 20 minutes different. Going to Ipswich however proved to be a big mistake. They seemed a bit lost as to how to deal with Penny, they kept her in and put her on antibiotics, but the standard of care was so poor compared to Norwich, it was almost like going to a third world hospital. They put her on a ward with dementia patients, so she felt like she was in a psychiatric ward, and three of the patients were “screamers” – screaming every now and again at the slightest thing night or day. The worst bit was that on the Saturday a duty consultant came to do the rounds, Although he was actually from the diabetic clinic, he seemed to understand very little about how to control diabetes and decided he should put strict controls on Penny's insulin intake, completely ignoring the fact that Penny has been diabetic and happily looking after her insulin levels for 50+ years. He ordered the staff to keep a tight watch on the insulin Penny took, not allowing her to take what she normally would. As a consequence, this regime completely messed up her blood sugars. They kept her in over the weekend and by Monday her blood sugars were all over the place, the last thing she needed with a sepsis infection. So, on the

Monday, she said she was leaving no matter what they said and on Monday afternoon I went in to collect her and we walked out the door.

The remarkable thing is that since that time, the tumour seemed to start shrinking and virtually disappear. Without the pressure of the tumour on the nerves in her arm, it meant that I could take her off the pain meds she was on, and she was on some heavy-duty stuff, including regular doses of morphine. There was still a hard layer where it was, so we were not sure if the cancer had gone altogether or whether it was just some form of scarring or calcification of the tissue.

We went in for a CT scan on the 26th November to gain a better picture of the current status and had a follow up with the oncology consultant on the 12th December to get the result. The note from the radiologist to the oncology consultant that accompanied the results probably sums it up best when she said: “What have you done with this patient – have you come up with a cure for cancer?”. Although they could not say for sure that the cancer had gone completely, and wished to keep her on with the current chemotherapy regime, the results certainly look very positive. We, of course were elated, and to celebrate we did our usual thing of getting a Costa coffee from the café on the way out. Penny liked to have a soy latte with a shot of vanilla flavouring. I just had my usual boring black Americano.

Penny had been suffering various side effects from the current chemotherapy regime, with soreness and peeling of the tips of her fingers and bottoms of her feet. This is not useful, particularly for a diabetic that has to take regular blood tests and look after her feet. In addition, over the last week or so Penny has also had a very sore mouth and throat and mouth ulcers to go with it, all added side effects of the chemo. As a consequence, Penny wanted a break from the chemo, and as the oncology consultant was so surprised by the reduction in the cancer he was happy to agree to stop it until the end of January and we hoped that this break would give Penny some time to recover over Christmas.

Now that it looked like the cancer had gone into remission, we were scheduled to see the cardiology consultant on the 6th January to determine the next steps on that front. With the diet and supplements I had put Penny on, I was hoping that her heart condition would have improved. Penny had regular blood tests, at least every three weeks, and each time we saw improvements in both the cancer markers and red blood cell and haemoglobin counts. Certainly, in the run up to Christmas 2019 she felt a lot better and stronger, although more recently

diminished by the pain in her mouth and consequent restriction on what she can, and feels like, eating. My aim was to get the heart condition reversed through the diet and supplements so that she did not require any corrective surgery.

All in all, Penny had gone from what looked to be quite a dire situation and having to consider the possibility and plans for a relatively imminent death, to being able to look to the future again. She certainly hoped to be getting out and doing more singing again on a regular basis for quite a while to come.

In the meantime, we had come to know the road to Norwich Hospital quite well, having been there 3 - 4 times a week in some weeks. It has also meant that the majority of things planned for the year had had to be put on the “back-burner”.

Although being on a vegan diet at this time, Penny had a hankering for some seafood for Christmas (and as a celebration of the cancer remission), so I ordered in some lobster and langoustines from a specialist supplier and cooked her up a seafood feast – which she much enjoyed and appreciated.

February 2020 Penny started to get pains back in her shoulder and it seemed like the lump had started to grow again. From then on it seemed to grow back with a vengeance. During this time the Covid pandemic started to take hold and in March we went into full lock-down. On one day in early April Penny started vomiting and it got worse and worse over the course of the day. The anti-sickness drugs I had at my disposal had no effect and the local doctor offered no real solution so eventually I had to call an ambulance. Penny was taken to hospital – not the ideal place at that time as it was filling up with Covid patients. She eventually recovered but the acid vomited up from her stomach had burnt her lips, mouth and throat so she found it difficult to speak and swallow. However she was desperate to get home from hospital and with the hospital filling up with Covid cases they were keen to get her out as soon as possible as in her weakened state she was very susceptible to Covid infection. Eventually they released her back into my care.

On the 19th April we had a visit from the hospice team, who stated that in their view Penny was now terminally ill and only had a few weeks left. She wanted to stay at home, in my care rather than go into a hospice, both for the comfort of home, to keep away from Covid as much as possible and to be with our dog. I continued to nurse her, under lock-down, with minimal medical support until she finally passed away peacefully on the 11th July 2020.

At some stage in discussion with Penny’s daughters who both lived in California with their families, I spoke of my disappointment that the diet that I had put her (and myself) on had not stopped the cancer. The response I got from Penny’s youngest daughter was to say that I had kept her going for 17 years since her first cancer diagnosis which was pretty good going, and something to be proud of.

During the last few months of her illness, we had so many lovely flowers arrive from generous well-wishers that we could have opened a flower shop, and I would set them out in the bedroom every day to brighten the room up. There was however, one arrangement which my brother and sister-in-law bought for Penny’s last birthday in June 2020 which stood out in particular, that despite the circumstances brought a smile to our faces just looking at it.



For me, it was both an honour and a privilege to have nursed Penny at home through to the end of her life and doing so under the constraints of lock-down. With the uncertainty of lock-down Penny and I had agreed that, when the time came, I would arrange a simple private cremation and hold a memorial

at a later date. I tried to arrange for a celebration of her life in September 2021, but had to cancel it due to both the persistence of the Covid pandemic and constraints on travel for those family and friends wishing to attend from abroad. At the time of writing this book (January 2022) I am now aiming to be able to do something in the summer of 2022. At least that delay has allowed me time to prepare and give Penny the send-off that she deserves and will finally provide that all important level of closure to family and friends alike as well as for myself.

Penny was not a religious person, but she was a spiritual person. Earlier in her life whilst still in America she spent 12 years in the heavy-duty Pentecostal Church. However, she was too curious for it, asking too many difficult questions and became disillusioned with the lack of answers and the antipathy she was inspiring through them. Suffice to say that it became evident on both sides that the church did not suit Penny.

So, it was Penny's request for a humanist service on her death with contributions from friends and family a selection of pictures of her life on display along with items that represent her achievements – her books, her artwork, her poetry and of course her music. Instead of hymns she wished for people to sing 3 particular songs:

“You’ve Got a Friend” by Carol King.

“Honky Tonk Woman” by the Rolling Stones

“River Deep Mountain High” by Tina Turner

There are many others I know who have lost family whilst under Covid restrictions. From my own experience, I know how much harder this makes things and my heart goes out to you all.

One day we will be able to properly celebrate the life of the remarkable woman that was Penny Parks, and the woman that has been a part of my life for 35 years and I was, and am, proud to have called my wife. In the meantime, this book will have to suffice as a tribute to her and her life's work.

There are many friends that have been very supportive to me and helping me through this difficult time: Chantal and Dan and Becky & Nigel for doing my shopping for me and being there for me through lock-down which greatly alleviated my worries about how I was going to get supplies in and feed both

Penny and myself. Many others who have called me, texted me or emailed me on a regular basis to check up on me and make sure that I was OK - Shaun and Esther in particular for ringing me two to three times a week from Holland. But there is one special friend that I would particularly like to thank, and that is my long-standing friend Jane for checking up and being there for me on a daily basis, for putting up with me on my less pleasant days, and for transforming my garden.

A big **Thank You** to all of you.

Legacy

Penny's early life experiences imbued in her a polarised response and she subsequently recognised that we can change – that our self, our identity is not set in stone. She then set about finding out how best to make those changes – eventually developing into PICT.

Penny left a remarkable legacy in the form of her therapy model Parks Inner Child Therapy (PICT) that enables release from that our default, inherited identity. By releasing ourselves from that default identity we are then able to create, inhabit and build a new identity based on where we wish to get to rather than continue to exist in the default identity based on where we have come from.

Through both her personal life and her subsequent work Penny has shown that no matter how scarred or deeply ingrained that identity, it can be changed, and, with PICT, she has provided the tools to do it. Enabling those with a troubled or damaged childhood to reshape their identity and live a more joyful, fruitful and fulfilling life.

At the time of writing, one of Penny's trainers, Lindsay, and I are working on how best to take it forward. During Penny's lifetime she was hampered in getting it to the level of recognition it deserves. For my part, I have some ambitious plans for it. Earlier on in the year I came across a quote that was written on a bumper sticker of a car, it read: "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste" and so too with the Coronavirus crisis, it is a challenge that has also provided many opportunities. My aim is to develop PICT in such a way that it becomes accessible to all who wish it using every facility and technology available. I am also aiming to get the support of some high profile people as well as the backing and help of major tech companies. I have given myself a time-scale of 3 years to achieve this goal.

Summary

If I had to sum up Penny in one word, I would say that above all she was a Performer. She loved to perform – whether it was through her therapy, her teaching and workshops or through her singing. She came alive when she was able to engage people, and from the experiences in her life she had developed the ability to connect with people on a deeper level and doing so quickly – immediately establishing rapport. A skill that she learned from her school days – having to switch schools so frequently she had to find a way of quickly making friends. Many of her clients thought that she could read their minds – as she knew exactly what they had been through, could understand it and reflect it back to them. In many respects she was like a mirror.

One of the attributes of all top performers, and singers in particular, is that of good diction, and with Penny you could hear every word. Most likely helped by her time as a telephone operator on her early days in which profession a very good telephone voice was a key requisite for the job.

At the end of most workshops or training sessions she would normally end with a song, and one of the songs that Penny most enjoyed singing, and in my opinion think that no one sings it better is that of Summertime. She has made it her own.

Over the years I have lost both parents, other close family members, close friends and beloved dogs, but there is no greater and deeper loss than losing one's life partner. I feel deeply honoured to have been able to nurse Penny through the last months, days and minutes of her life, and doing so under Covid lock-down significantly ramped up the intensity and difficulty of this experience.

We choose how we deal with adversity - we choose whether to be a victim or a champion. Penny chose to be a champion. As a champion, Penny faced death with such grace, dignity and courage - the like of which I had never witnessed before. A grace, dignity and courage that made it easier for me as I nursed her through to the end, and doing so under the constraints of lock-down, and I thank her deeply for that.

I am honoured to have been a part of her life and to have had her as my wife and partner.

Penny's Poetry

Over the years Penny wrote a number of Poems, and in 2019 joined a local group of poetry writers who met regularly to share their writings. Penny enjoyed these very much. I have included here a selection of her poetry.



Queenie's Eight Puppies

Even in the darkest childhood there are times of light. It may be with friends, at school or with a useful family member. This was one of mine. I was ten years old, enjoying this wonderful day with my lovely, eleven-year-old step-sister, Dorothy, who was visiting for the summer.

Whenever I wish to cheer myself, or I see some similar puppies, I bring this memory out of its special place and enjoy it fully!

“I’m being trampled by puppy feet!”,
I gasped through giggles. “Me too!”, my sister giggled back.
Queenie gratefully rested in a peaceful
Corner of the musty old chicken shed.

The sun shining through smudged shed windows warmed us.
Fresh straw buffered our elbows and knees,
As we gleefully rolled about with the merciless puppies.

Puppy noses tickled under our shirts, while sharp puppy teeth
relentlessly tugged at our clothes, sandals and plaits.
Soft, shiny puppy fur soothingly rubbed against our scratches and welts.

Our ears were full of puppy growls and barks,
Not to mention our own non-stop squeals and laughter.
It was a perfect summer’s day.

Molestation

I was facilitating a support group in California and members wrote poetry, drew pictures or wrote little stories to express their feelings or experiences about the abuse they had been exposed to.

This was my poem, written from my point of view as a child, concerning telling my mother about the sexual abuse by my step-father. His abuse started when I was four, but this poem is about telling my mother when I was six.

“It’s a secret”,
Daddy says.
No one will know
Except me and him.
It’s our special game.

“Be nice to your new daddy”,
Mommy says.
“Mind him -
Do what he tells you.”

Daddy, I don’t like our game,
It hurts me, I’m afraid.
No, I don’t want to go to jail....
Mommy will too believe me!

I told.
Mommy’s mad at me,
She says I’m a liar.
Daddy says I’m lucky,
I could have gone to jail.

Oh well, I’ll just keep pretending
I’m somewhere else.
Maybe daddy will get tired
Of his game.

I hope mommy won’t be mad anymore.
I promise I won’t tell again.

Sexual Abuse

My books, and the therapists who have been trained in the therapeutic model I created, Parks Inner Child Therapy, have helped many people reclaim their life from the ravages of childhood abuse. However, there is such a back-log of people who have yet to find help (plus more added to the list everyday), it sometimes feels overwhelming.

I feel it most when watching a documentary or reading about someone’s poignant story. Several years ago, I wrote about those feelings in this poem.

It’s been over for thirty years.
I’ve come a long way -
No more nightmares,
No more shakes, sweating or panic
When I talk about it.

I’ve learned to stop blaming myself.
I’ve stopped hating my mother
For not saving me.
Anger and bitterness towards my stepfather,
And the five other abusers,
Has slowly ebbed away.

I have finally chosen a partner
Who is loving.
I no longer sabotage my happiness
With people and problems,
To pay for a debt that I never owed.
I don’t feel defective any longer.

But still, when I hear the stories
Of others like me, I cry.
There seems to be a terrible grief inside.
A howling cry that would finish me
If I let it out.

Grief for innocence and freedom
I never knew as a child.
Grief for the others, not as lucky as I,
Whose loss may consume them.

Time Marches On

During my late forties, I watched a film about a woman looking back on her life, noting what she had learned and how she had changed. I began to think about my own life in those terms. Remembering my attitudes and choices in my twenties made me blush and then laugh with embarrassment – could I have been so ridiculously self-absorbed?!

As I thought about my thirties, it didn't seem much better. I still found plenty to blush and laugh about. However, it did seem that some improvement had developed in my forties, so, smiling, I deemed it appropriate to record it all in a poem.

Isn't it surprising
How clear hindsight is?
But isn't it dreadful
To have to view those unpleasant ghosts
Which suddenly become crystal clear?!

At twenty...
'I've always been
Mature for my age'.
(The lack of humility
Should have been a clue)
Busily blazing new trails,
I ignored all road signs.

At thirty...
I changed my name;
Religion and hometown.
Values; job; hairstyle;
And bought a new car.
Carved notches on my bedpost.
Observed all road signs,
Followed those pointing inward.

At forty...
Changed my name again
And sold my bedpost.
I'm busy reading old roadmaps,
(Mine and other's)
Hoping to avoid the ghosts
Of mistakes past.

My Friend

This was written about a friend who was very special to me. I wanted to write something that identified exactly what it was that made her so special. Over the years I've been blessed with a few more exceptional friends like her.

A special smile
When I hear your name.
An instant lift
To hear your voice on the 'phone.
Exhilaration
To be in your presence.

How can there be so much to say
When we're together?
The exchange of energy
Is always a surprise.
Something about you
Stimulates my mind
To sudden creative ideas.

When I'm with you
I'm funnier, wiser,
Very intuitive and feel special.

Even better than all that...
I don't change status
In your eyes when I'm
Stupid, depressed, foolish,
Confused and feel
Less than ordinary.

In fact, being with you
Can change all that negative to positive.

Thank you, my friend.

Suicide

Suicide was something I had struggled with – a horrible shadow that visited me when things were especially difficult.

My father had shot himself when he was 43 (I barely knew him and only have three memories of him) and my mother would frequently warn me that I would end up like him, 'You'll kill yourself someday, just like your father did!' I'm still not sure why she thought it was important to say that, other than I must have had behaviours, appearance or 'ways of being' that were similar to him.

It felt like a prophecy that I had to fight against, so I'm not surprised that 'suicide' became a horrible shadow in my life.

As a side note, my mother always said my father was 42 when he died, so when I turned 43 I rang my mother to brag that I had fully passed 42 and was not dead. Instead of any realisation that she may have caused distress with her prediction, she casually commented, 'Oh, no, he was 43 when he died'. I rolled my eyes and, with tongue in cheek, answered, 'Gee, thanks Mom, another year of fear.'

The dark side...
It beckons me, 'step in'.
'Step in, no struggle here.
Sweet nothingness.
No pain, no fear,
No trying to figure out why.'
'Step in'.

I push away,
Yet at the same time
I'm strangely drawn.
It seems so easy there,
And I'm feeling tired.
With massaging fingers
The dark side pulls again.
'Step in'.

Shall I? The recent pain
Has left my mind so raw,
It hurts to think.
I yearn to be like a child again,
With someone else in charge.
Let them sort me out
And reassemble all my parts.

'Step in'
Ignore your gains,
Concentrate solely on your loss.
That's the catalyst used
To step into the dark side.
Faces flash before me.
The agony reflected there
Jars my mind to think again.

The faces are those who I love.
Will I pass my pain along to the innocent?
They deserve it less than I.
Step in? No, I'll sleep now.
In the morning,
I'll step up.

Loneliness

I was in my late-thirties and, despite the draw backs of my childhood experiences, I was a successful and strong woman. People seemed drawn to me because of my inner strength, they would often divulge their fears, weaknesses and problems to me, saying they had never shared the information with anyone else.

I didn't mind being supportive to others, but occasionally, I longed for a close partner who I could fully trust and share my own vulnerability. I knew the kind of relationship I wanted, but I was challenged to meet that sort of 'someone'. This poem expressed my feelings at that time.

Loneliness.
Not the kind relieved by company.
I can still be lonely in the midst of others.

My need is for the comfort
Of someone who knows me.

Where thoughts are exchanged
As tangible as words.

Feelings are expressed in a look,
As easily as in an embrace.

I yearn to surrender my vulnerability
Into trusted hands.

Living with Grandmother

When I was two, my estranged birth father kidnapped me to punish my mother. He took me from California to the state of Washington, abandoning me for several months with my grandmother. She wasn't expecting me, nor did she welcome me.

She was very strict - I don't remember her smiling or laughing. She had all sorts of rules she quoted daily: 'Children should be seen and not heard', 'Want never gets', 'Curiosity killed the cat', etc. I don't think I understood half of what she was trying to tell me.

I wrote this poem in 'first-person' from my younger self.

"Eating between meals isn't allowed here.
You must eat what you're given, when you're given it,"
But, sometimes...my tummy is still hungry.

Grandmother's face is dark and frowning,
She points and shakes her finger.
"Children are never too young to learn the rules!"
I'm two years old.

I crouch behind the wood burning cooking stove,
I pretend I'm a cat.
There are no rules for cats.
I lick milk from the cat bowl there.

I jump on my cat legs to the pantry.
With my cat paws, I eat apples,
Till my cat tummy is full.
I take a cat nap.

I know that eating between meals isn't allowed here.
You must eat what you're given,
When you're given it.
But, sometimes...my tummy is still hungry.

Vegetables

One of the tools I designed to help people recover from the painful memories left from dysfunctional families, involves creating Resourceful Parents – the people the original parents would have been if their own past experiences had been positive. After that is completed, a painful memory from childhood is chosen, but instead of happening as it did, instead it becomes transformed by removing the old parents and replacing them with the Resourceful Parents. The person gets to experience what it is like to be in a family where parents behave kindly – it is a very powerful experience. The result of the exercise is for the person to realise that there was nothing wrong with them, it was only the dysfunctional parents that needed changing.

This Vegetable story transforms a horrific experience from my childhood, including beating, shouting and being sick, into a Resourceful Mother using shrewd methods to encourage co-operation. I updated the story with the inclusion of Harry Potter because I would have loved that as a part of my childhood experience.

Vegetables are good for you!
 Mother preached till she was blue.
 But those colourful vegetables (especially green)
 Were impossible to chew.

It was a constant battle
 Between two determined foes.
 One who made the rules
 And one who sat for hours
 Before vegetables stone cold.

I practiced well my 'sad face'
 And it worked a treat with others –
 Auntie, Nan and Grandad,
 But not one single jot
 With Mother!

Plan 'B' began with folded arms
 And my face set hard as stone.
 Crafty Mother played her wild card –
 Whilst I began to groan.

The Harry Potter DVD
 I'd waited for so long,
 Started playing in the lounge
 Where the vegetable eaters
 Now thronged.

I rolled my eyes and set my face.
 Then quick as a bunny my cold
 Vegetables were eaten.
 Wiley Mother knew her game!
 Her foe succinctly beaten.

Being Myself

This poem was written as a result of a conversation with a friend. We were lamenting how parents put so many expectations on their off-spring to make choices that please the parents – job, clothing, friends, books, films... Additionally, society, peers, clubs, schools, church also expect choices to be made to adhere to their viewpoints.

My friend and I were coming to the place where we wanted to make choices to suit what we wanted; but were finding the process more difficult than we expected. It seemed the 'rules' we had followed for so long were rather ingrained and we would find ourselves making a decision out of habit, rather than choice.

We laughed to think it was like trying to achieve something we didn't even want or chasing someone else's shadow. We were surprised to realise that we didn't clearly know who we really were because we were so used to being what others told us we should be. It was fun over the next few months as we met up and wrote lists of what 'we' wanted to be, do, achieve, read, wear or the films we wanted to see.

Chasing a shadow -
I see her rounding the corner -
Oh...missed her once again.

The chase becomes tiring,
I stop from time to time for rest.
She returns to tease me,
Dancing dangerously close,
Then quickly away as I follow.

Who is she?!
The mystery often engulfs me,
Tearing at my mind.
Shake her loose! Who cares!
Laugh a lot, don't be alone,
Keep busy - she'll go away.

I've tried all that.
The years pass by,
The pursuit is still engaged.
Running - resting - seeking,
But not finding yet.

Funny how she looks
So much like me....
My god! Have I been chasing
A reflection of myself?
Only a mirage, formed by what
Others say to be?

Let her run. She's theirs... I'm mine.

Judge Not (Ye Fool)

Most people make judgemental comments about others – strangers, friends, family, colleagues and probably most often about people on television - something I've certainly been known to do.

Ironically, I would later discover (thanks to my teenaged daughters who were happy to point out my many faults) that I did/said the same things I criticised. After all, it is said that people dislike in others what is present in themselves. Consequently, I reckoned that maybe if I granted a few 'pardons' to others and got off my judgemental 'high horse', I may be successful in changing my own behaviour.

Keeping a sense of humour about the subject, I wrote this poem.

Let's see...
Who have I condemned?

It's important
That I make a list.

It has occurred to me,
That I have walked
In the shoes of those condemned
On several occasions, so far.

In that light,
It might be wise
To check out the list
And see what lies ahead.

Who knows,
There may be time
To grant a few pardons.

An ounce of prevention...

Battered Woman

I was active in the feminist movement in California – facilitating abuse support groups, volunteering at the battered women's refuge, rape crisis, plus speaking and teaching personal development workshops. Although I had never been battered in an adult relationship, during childhood, beatings were almost an everyday event, so I certainly knew about paralysing fear.

Counselling the women at the refuge gave me further insight to their feelings and thoughts. The refuge asked me to write a poem that gave clarity to the complexities of their physical and emotional abuse.

The fighting...
Insults exchanged, anger escalated.
The side of my face is numbed,
Bruises from my fall.
One sudden blow is followed by
His tears of remorse, an apology
And promises of 'never again'.

The fighting...
Frustration increases.
Can't I say anything right?
The taste of blood,
My eye is swollen shut.
I stay in the house, ashamed.
No tears this time,
Just an apology and promises.

The fighting...
No special reason,
Maybe foreplay
To the intercourse of battery.
Bruises, cuts, broken bones.
More painful than all is the fear.
Paralysed, like a frightened animal.
I hate what I've become.

No apologies this time,
No promises...

A Selection of Tributes to Penny



Dear Rod,

Both you and Penny made a huge impact on my life! I found that part of my life gave me a huge sense of empowerment and I found PICT therapy was an amazing tool, especially after Penny developed the visualization with the inner child and the time line. It is so powerful and transformative in allowing the client to heal and integrate.

I am so pleased to learn that her legacy is there with so many practicing therapists and training continuing for the next generation.

I felt that the degree at Norwich City College that I was taking, which covered several forms of psychology and counselling, gave me a broad perspective and background on the various different forms of psychological analysis that had found a place in therapy today. PICT therapy to my mind was so far ahead of the others because it combined the best and most transformative aspects of these theories. Allowing the client to integrate all aspects of the conscious and unconscious mind, especially the inner child.

That is the genius of PICT therapy!

- S.D. - PICT Therapist

I have just seen on the website to my shock the news of the tragic passing of the beautiful lady Penny. I first engaged with Penny about 9 and a half years ago as a student. I sent her an email stating I was a student and the reason for making contact thinking I would get a generic response back, to my surprise I got an invitation to interview Penny, she was so open and honest which ended up for me feeling like I had known her a long time. We did eventually meet a couple of years ago at a workshop in Stockport where I live organised by a fellow colleague. It was a true honour to meet Penny in person she was so authentic and interesting. I would like very much to pass on my very sincere condolences to all of her family whom she spoke to me about with such high regard, love and pride. She will always be a true inspiration to me and I believe an amazing Beacon to everyone that she has touched. May she rest in eternal Peace and God Bless. All my very best wishes

Paula. Xx MBACP.

I can hardly believe am writing this email and that am writing it because Penny has taken her last breath and gone to sleep. With deep sadness and a twinkle of a smile I remember the first time I met her. She was funny and talented and of course she sang for the class as only Penny could. Then of course I remember her stage presence as she presented the Resourceful Self for ACC in Croydon all those years ago, such a gift and of course the many times I spoke to her on the phone such graciousness.

- M. S. - PICT Therapist

Dear Penny,

It is hard to know what to say. I just felt that I wanted to make sure that you know just how special you are. Because of the suffering you endured in your childhood you have been able to help so many people to heal and live happy lives. I wonder what all those people would have done without your incredible ideas and tools. Who would they be now?

For me personally, I feel as though meeting you marked a real turning point in my life. Changing my mistaken beliefs and “reparenting” myself has been the making of me in so many ways. I am sure that thousands of others would agree that your work has been instrumental in their personal growth.

What a tremendous legacy! You are a force of nature and so loved by Rod, who really is the gentle giant. I am so sad for him too but I know that he will be pouring all of himself into your care right now.

To both of you we send our love and thoughts.

- Liz & Mike

Dear Penny,

I am so sorry to hear that you are terminally ill. You said in your message that you are OK with this, and I respect your right to be OK with it and support you in your courage and strength to face whatever comes.

What an amazing life you have lived. You found the courage to take your own distress and channel it into supporting others. You are an amazing inspirational speaker, an amazing singer, writer and have a wonderful sense of humour. You have touched so many lives.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the privilege of knowing you and working with you. I shall never forget the week we spent together in the summer of 2017. This was a seminal moment in my healing and in my growth as a person. You gave me unconditional love to enable me to find inner resources to deal with my demons and gave me permission to apportion blame where it truly lies. You enable me to process grief and trauma associated with my losses – treasured pets, birth parents and baby daughter. Despite the enormity of all this, you enabled me to laugh and have fun during our time at Quay Place.

What I will miss most is the comfort of knowing that you are there should I need you. But then hey, what do we know?! Perhaps you will always be there, you will certainly always be in my heart. And you will be ever present in my gorgeous soft toy (whom I have named Penny!), in the earrings, the Lacey Street CD, and in the Faber Castell mechanical pencil you gave me at the end of our time together. I will always treasure these reminders of you.

Whatever comes between now and the end of your life, please know that my thoughts and love are there with you.,

-J.S. - PICT Client

Hi Rod,

I am so very upset to hear Penny is so sick.

Penny saved my life and I finally grew up. Please let her know how grateful I am and how I have thought of her so often. I feel such an endearing love for her and the healing she brought to me and the world. I regularly read all the books she gave me and her “ Mistaken belief “ guided imagery, it is so powerful I still use it. I also have your business/ customer service booklets .

The work she developed is the only thing that works. I am doing Marisa Peers RTT online course as a means to an end so I can go to England next year and do Penny’s PICT Diploma with Lindsay Schofield. I have downloaded the requirements for applying. I intend to be Australia’s first PICT Practitioner !

Rod I am so sorry you are suffering too. I know how emotionally and physically exhausting it is looking after a loved one at a time like this. My heart goes out to you both.

I would like to call you this week if that’s OK. I can’t stop crying tonight. Penny is such a beautiful soul.

Love Terese xxx

I had the pleasure and honour to meet Penny Parks few times during one day courses and while I had been studying PICT five years ago in Beccles in welcoming home of Susan Osborne. After that we were planning together with Penny to translate PICT to Polish and give Polish therapists opportunity to learn and use PICT in their language. Finally the idea failed, but PICT is still my favourite therapeutic approach and I am still inspired by Penny's Park work and ideas.

I will remember her as an amazing person, who could change her very difficult experiences to wonderful tools, which can help other people to find theirs strength and change theirs life. And her incredible work is eternal and will help people as long as they need this help even the lovely creator is not physically with us any longer.

I want to pay my tribute to Penny Parks on my own and on the behalf of the hundreds of my clients, whose lives were changed thanks to Penny's ideas.

Best regards

B.B. - PICT Therapist

I attended one of Penny's training sessions a few years back and have been using all that I learnt on that training since!

Penny's work has been absolutely invaluable to me and my clients in their work with the inner child and also, most importantly, in their healing.

I would be grateful if you could pass on my condolences and heartfelt hugs to her family and team, and let them know that her name will live on as I will continue to use what I have been taught through her.

-J.N. PICT Therapist

I owe so much to Penny. Firstly she saved my life, then changed it. I wouldn't be the person I am today or have achieved everything I've achieved without her. In fact I probably wouldn't be here to tell the tale. I expect thousands of other people will say the same.

I'll never forget what she did for me nor her singing 'Cry Me a River', every time I hear it it reminds me of Penny and always brings a tear.

- A.M. PICT Client

Back in 1992 I had the gift of visiting Penny whilst she lived in Trimley, near Ipswich. As a 36 year old man, struggling to come to terms with sexual abuse as a child, Penny gave so much that went a long way to saving my sanity. She taught me how to uncover the roots of the mistaken beliefs that dominated my thinking, and put me onto the path of mental hygiene I practice to this day.

I am a different man to the one Penny showed how to go to my safe place, and help my inner child to dress himself as he wanted to be dressed. The first time she showed me that I was loveable is an event I remember vividly 28 years later.

In 1993 she even attended my wedding.

So many things in this life can shape us, but the gifts Penny gave me truly helped. The simple method of finding the mistaken beliefs and correcting them with truth, is a technique I have practiced on many occasions. It is with pleasure I can say that from the mentally dangerous place I started from, with Penny's help, I am now a peaceful, satisfied man.

Please give my deepest condolences to her family. I feel sure she will be missed by many.

Fondest regards,

L.G. - PICT Client

Dear Penny,

You cured me of my lifelong phobia of needles.

In one simple and miraculous session – tapping my arm and associating the right thoughts with the right outcome. You made it look so easy. It was life-changing for me.

Sadly you did not cure me of my phobia of writing.

In fairness I did not ask you to.... Otherwise I would be able to write a much more eloquent testimonial to your gifts as a therapist and human being.

With hindsight I should have asked you to help me with so many things.

You have left this world and leave us behind - full of regrets and missed opportunities.

I am deeply grateful to you for leaving me with the image of the “oversized jumper” of handed-down thoughts from previous generations. Thoughts that no longer fit.

I think of this image often and will carry you in my heart.

I remember you as an amazing singer – vibrant and captivating on stage. Such energy.

I will always be sad that you did not write another book. You had several more books in you.

You leave many people behind who will mourn you and smile when they think of you. Tears and laughter at the same time. You would have something funny to say about that.

A life well lived.

With thanks

A.B. - Client

Dear Penny,

We were so very sad to hear your news, quite a shock, as you appeared to have fought off your illness a short time ago.

Christine said that you are still finding the inner strength to laugh about things, just as you were when I spoke to you on the phone a while back. You are an amazing lady Penny.

We are thinking of Rod too, as it is a huge roller-coaster of emotions you are both dealing with and it is a difficult time to face together.

I do believe that you are about to embark on an exciting new journey in your eternal sojourn and that we will all meet again before too long.

Thank you for all for the lovely times we had together. We had lots of fun and I really enjoyed the workshops that you had at your place all those years ago. It was an ideal venue for them. Also, the parties and BBQs that you kindly invited us to. We also had that wonderful day at Wyken Hall and the Leaping Hare. Everything was perfect, the weather, the food, the open gardens, the riverside decking where we rested a while, the great conversation, each others company and a visit to the gift shop.

Then there were all of the venues we visited to watch you and your friends singing and making music. At many of them Rod was sorting out the acoustics, always bare-footed so that he could connect to the earth, I am a great believer in that. I also remember having dinner together at Christine and Tom's – that was a lovely evening too.

You are an unusual couple and interesting too, who have always followed your own dreams and have been loved and admired by many. You have made a big contribution to life for the betterment of others, which is a life to be proud of.

For now, dear friend, we send lots of love and big hugs to you both. Our thoughts are with you and our memories will always be in our hearts.

Bless you both, enjoy the beautiful month of May.

Mags & Ernie

Penny was an inspirational, generous, vibrant, loyal friend who enriched me (us all) and taught me so much.

Her wit and positive approach was a light shining in my life. I will greatly miss her! She will be in my heart and mind as that light shines forever.

- A.B.

Dear Rod,

I feel sadness for your loss and share a sense of loss and sadness that so many people who were reached and touched by Penny will also experience now she has passed.

I am and will continue to be forever grateful for her teachings, creativity and bundles of energy. I can remember so well staying at your home to complete training in Penny's inspirational work.

Through her great skill and tenacity, endless subconscious's have been re-written. Mine included. My appreciation to be presented with a mirror so pure, so vibrant, so innocent and beautiful has continued to support me in realising the truth about the life that I am, and in turn support others too.

I have often wondered what might have become of me if I hadn't had the great fortune to meet Penny when I did. She taught me what true compassion is and to bear witness without judgement.

I love her dearly, and always will.

If it is at all possible to attend her funeral, I would truly love to be apart of celebrating her brilliance with you.

-

N.R. PICT Therapist

George and I were so sorry to hear about Penny passing away. She was an amazing woman who touched many, many lives.

We have a lot of memories of our times with Penny, in particular the trip to Italy that we all shared together.

Music, Therapy, art, teaching and writing kept Penny busy for so long. It was through those avenues that she gave so much to others. It is also through those avenues that so many of us will be sending thoughts and love from the bottom of our hearts.

- George & Christine

Penny was an amazing character who leaves behind a massive legacy. Not only in her therapy profession, where I know that she is highly regarded - our friend who is studying to be a counsellor said that Penny's name came up as a leading light on her course.

But of course, we along with so many others, will remember her for her singing. She had a fantastic voice, and she really knew how to use it to entertain. As someone who is learning to be a singer, I always felt that Penny gave a masterclass in all the things I was taught to do when we sung. I will think of Penny when I try my best to put them into practice in the future.

We feel so lucky that she came to sing in our "Big Shed", we had such a memorable afternoon with friends and we are sorry the follow up never happened.

- Kate & Mike

“Thank You”

Dear Penny,

You may be thinking why a thank you card? But there are many “Thank You’s” to come your way. I want to say I am so sorry that you are living with this, I wish that I could take you pain away, I really do. I so wish that I could visit – but the world is in turmoil at the moment, so visits are not allowed – as you know.

I recall when I first met you! We can all thank you for such a lovely voice and an amazing stage presence! So many great songs. Thank you for welcoming me onto the stage with you at the Caribbean Centre. When I was heavily pregnant with Matthew, now 20, you sang with Roger at PALS for me – thank you!

Apart from your musical accomplishments you have worked so hard to help others come through traumatic times in their lives. Each and every client will, I am sure, be so please that they have met you! (there’s another “thank you”).

We should have kept in touch more – easy to say as we have all had busy times in our lives. If you have a moment when you would like a little chat – please call me. I will be thinking of you every day and will send you loving, peaceful thoughts.

With lots of love from Janie and Roger.



REMEMBERING THE WONDERFUL TALENT OF PENNY PARKS

Penny Parks, Suffolk's First Lady of The Blues, has lost her brave battle with cancer. For many years Penny, who was 77 and lived in the Debenham area, was the lead singer with the hugely popular Lacey Street Blues Band.

It's fair to say Lacey Street were at the forefront of the revival of the local blues scene in the early 1980s. They played their first gig at The Mulberry Tree in Ipswich town centre and for the next few years were leaders in their field. Only months after they formed in 1983 they recorded an LP called *Blues In The Night* which received lots of airplay on Radio Caroline as well as from me during my Radio Orwell years.

That album was the perfect vehicle for American-born Penny's sultry blues and jazz vocals. In those early days guitarists John Adams and Steve Waller as well as harmonica player Steve Graham were also key members of the band along

**Stephen
Foster**



bassist Charles Rickards and drummer Brian Tweed.

Inevitably, there were changes in personnel along the way with Steve Dodd replacing Steve Waller on guitar and Tim Mower coming in as the next drummer but the real masterstroke was recruiting the wonderful saxophonist and singer Earl Howard. Earl's soulful performances took the group to another level only for the project to come to a premature end at a gig in 1989 when Earl suffered a fatal asthma attack.

By then Penny had parted company with the group but she was back in the fold for the Earl Howard memorial gig in 1990



Penny Parks with her Lacey Street Blues Band colleagues in 2017

Picture: STEPHEN FOSTER

which I was asked to emcee. Eight years later a Lacey Street reunion saw the group perform on the BBC Radio Suffolk stage at Ipswich Music Day. As I knew they would, the band went down an absolute storm with Penny delivering one of her best ever performances in front of several thousand people in the Christchurch Park sunshine.

Tomorrow evening on my

BBC Radio Suffolk show I'll be airing some of that memorable set as well as playing tracks from the aforementioned album which they made at Hillside Studios in Ipswich.

Penny's contribution to the Suffolk music scene was enormous.

Dressed in her customary figure-hugging long dresses, Penny was the consummate

professional on and off stage. Her band mates always gave her stunning voice the respect it deserved and her place in local music folklore is assured.

I'd like to send my sincere condolences to all her family and friends and once we all get back to some sort of normality post Covid-19 I plan to join them for a celebration of her wonderful life. Try keeping me away.

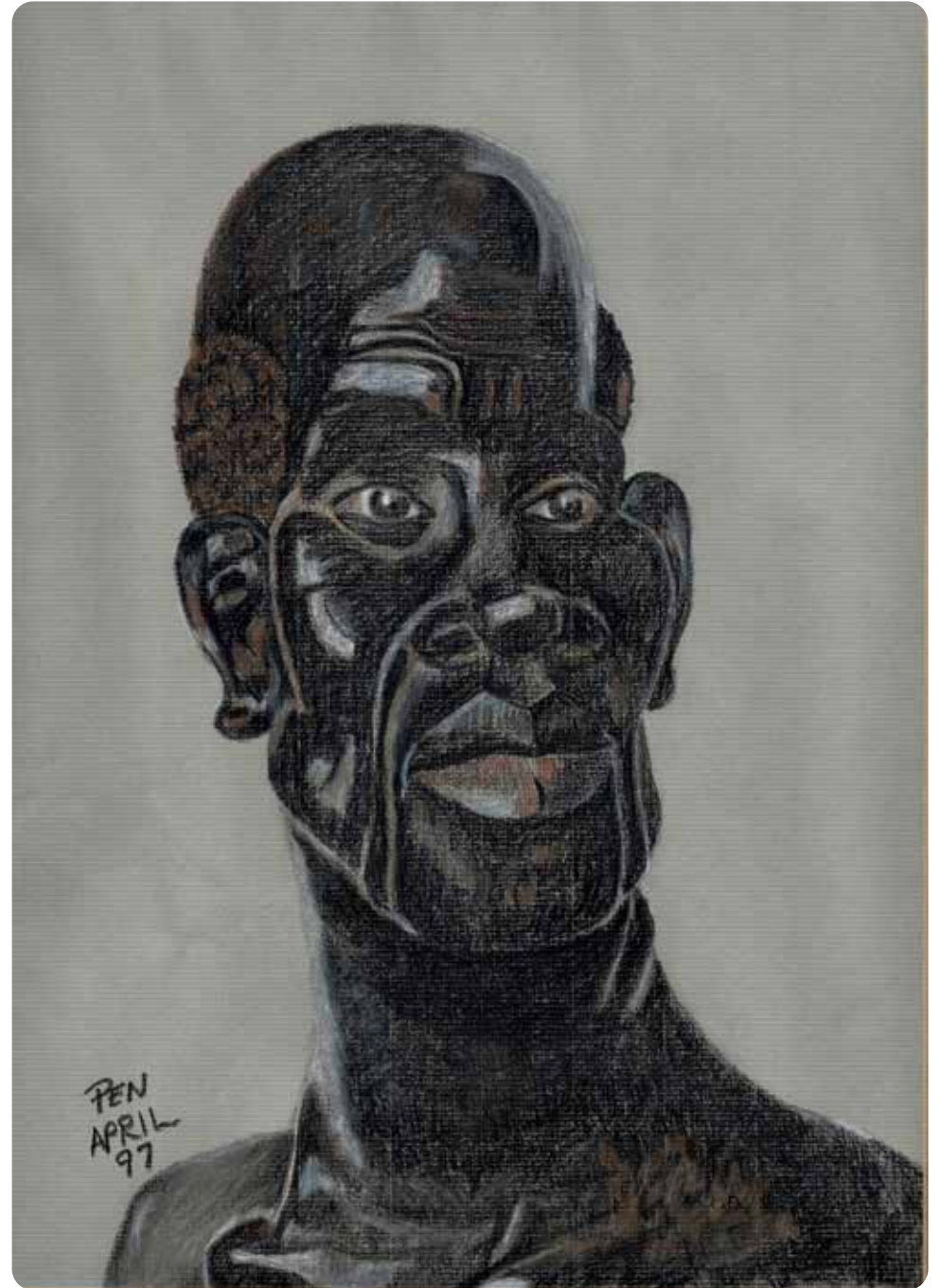
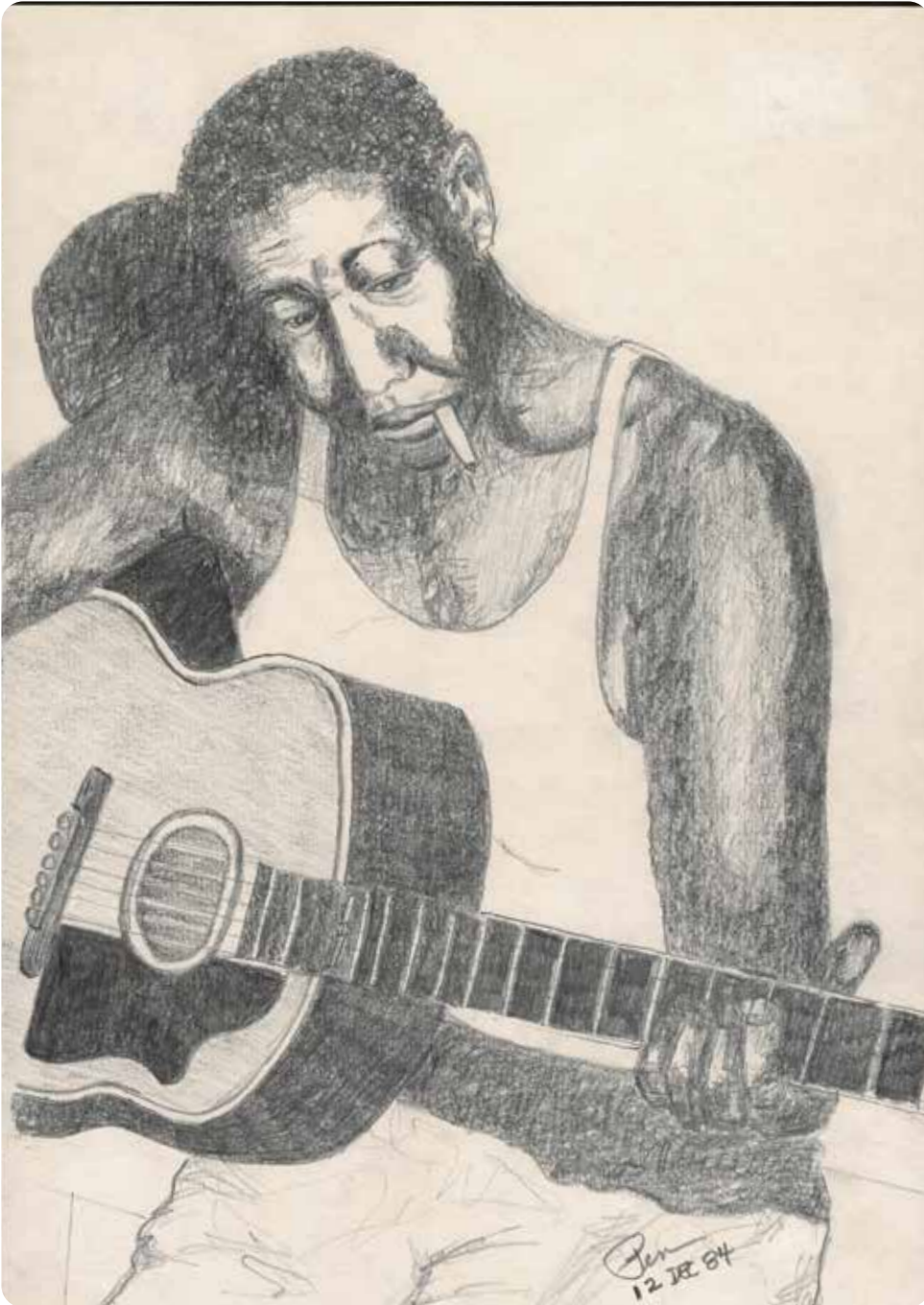
Penny's Artwork

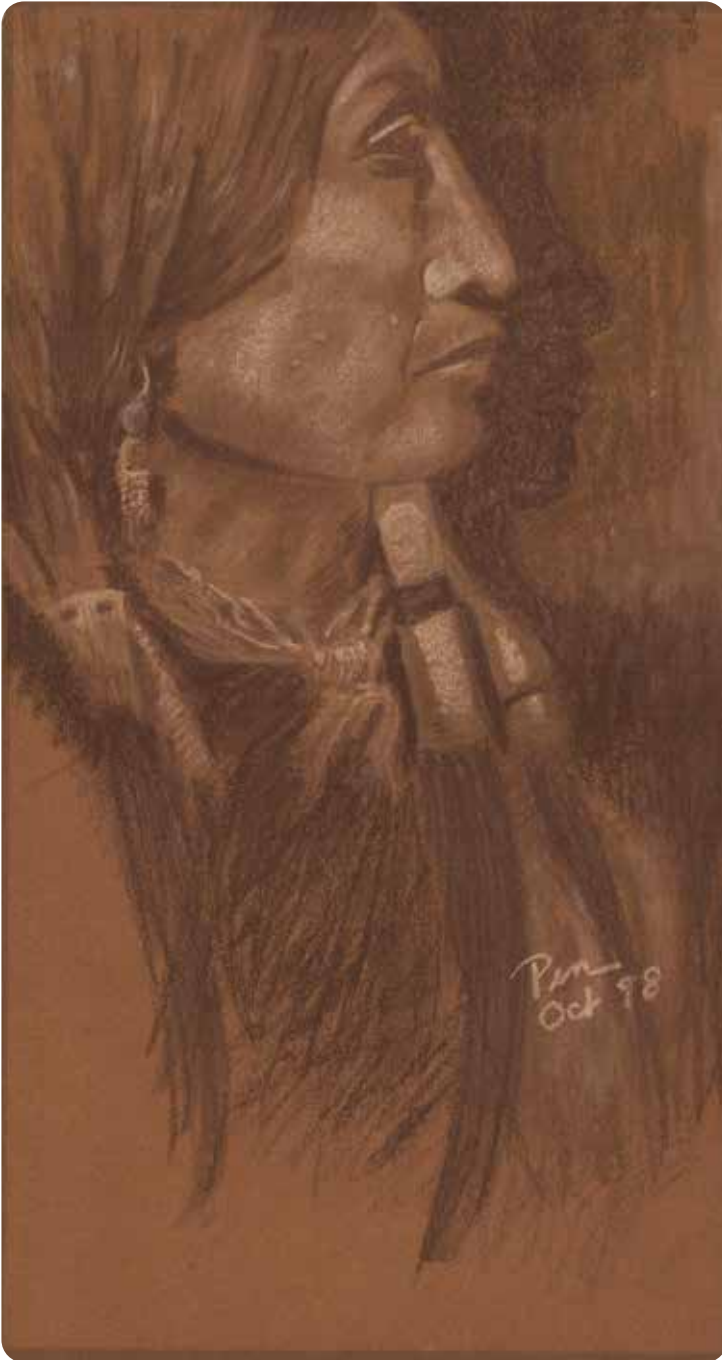


Penny
23 APRIL 95

Penny's Gorilla
“Wistful Contemplation”



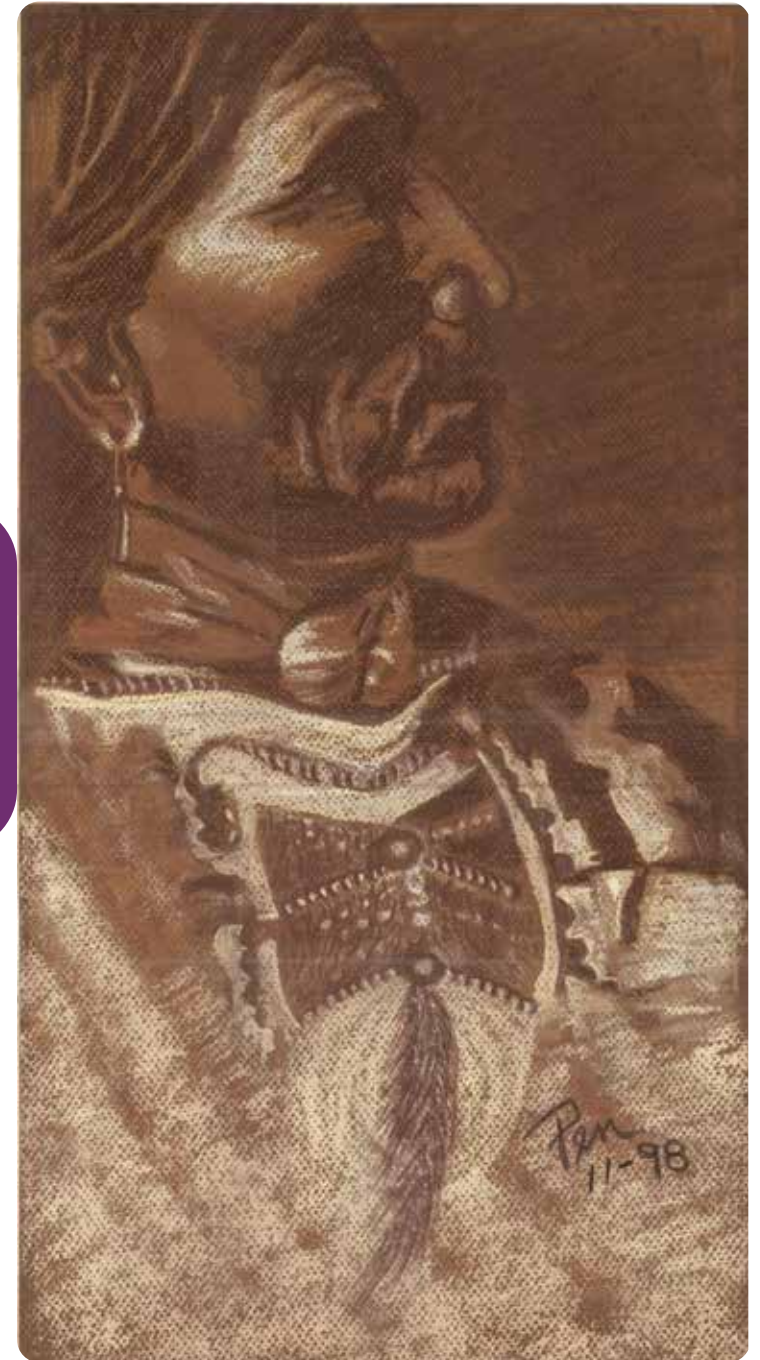




Penny's Indians

Penny had a fascination for Native Americans and drew many of them.

Most she sold, but these two she kept as she didn't think that they were up to standard.



The continuing pandemic has not made it easy dealing with bereavement and the PTSD I also suffered from through the experience of nursing Penny. This has been added to by the inability to hold any sort of proper funeral or celebration of life at this time. Various special friends have been brilliant in supporting me and I have found solace and comfort through the Zen Buddhism I turned to when my father died when I was 14. I have also found solace from the TED talks given by others who have lost their partners and I have provided a link to three talks in particular below that anyone who has suffered loss may find comfort from.

Nora McNerny - We don't move on from grief we move forward with it.



Jason B Rosenthal - The journey through loss and grief.



Lucy Kalanithi - What makes life worth living in the face of death.



As a student of Zen I also found this talk by Zen Priest Joan Halifax very useful (and then went on to read her books: "Being with Dying", "Staying at the Edge" and "A Fruitful Darkness").

Roshi Joan Halifax - Compassion and the true meaning of empathy.



Penny's Music
www.pennyparks.uk/singer





"Infinite Love"

The garden statue that I bought in memory of Penny.
It is a reflection of how Penny and I first got together.

