

TED ROWLEY – memories of a LEO colleague from Sharyn, his daughter



Ted's mother was born in USA but moved to the UK as a child. Ted was one of four children; he had one brother and two sisters all sadly passed away now.

He went to an Ealing school, graduating from University College in London with a degree in Physics.

During the Second World War Ted served as an officer in the Western Desert. Later, he was taken prisoner in Italy. With permission from the prison guards, he formed a "gardening club" and secretly dug an escape tunnel under the noses of the camp guards! He and three others successfully escaped down this tunnel and went on the run for 4 days before being caught again. He was shipped to another camp in Czechoslovakia before being liberated in 1945.

Before leaving the UK he and his girlfriend Molly devised a secret code which he used in his letters back home so he could keep her informed as to his whereabouts and which gave her an insight into what his life was like both as a serving officer and as a prisoner.

Ted met Molly on the station platform in Bath in 1941 and they married in February 1947. They started married life in Chiswick and then moved to West Ealing. In 1953, they moved with their three children Sharyn, Steve, and Pad to Ruislip, to the house which was to be their family home for nearly 60 years. It had a very large garden,

which kept them busy and gave them years of pleasure cultivating fruit and vegetables as well as maintaining the large flower borders.

After the war Ted worked for J Lyons, the well known food and catering company J Lyons, at its HQ, Cadby Hall in Hammersmith.. He was already a manager in the wages office at the time that Lyons developed the world's first business computer specifically to automate the work of the army of clerks processing the paper work generated from Lyons' many activities. The company formed to develop and operate the computer was named LEO (Lyons Electronic Office) Computers.

Ted was in some respect a different man from the typical LEO employee- usually a graduate straight from University with little business experience. Ted was older, and both a seasoned manager and a specialist in payroll. He was moved to LEO around 1950 specifically to help in the specification and later the operation of the payroll as it was brought onto the LEO1 computer, the forerunner of the computers we use today. He is remembered by his colleagues as a thoughtful, quiet man respected for his knowledge and sound common sense in a generally rather feverish environment, ensuring that the complicated transfer for the first time from a manual systems to an electronic computer was successfully accomplished.

Early family holidays were spent camping in Cornwall and Wales and the South of France. Once retired he and Molly enjoyed many holidays abroad, particularly touring the USA and meeting Ted's relatives in Ohio and Los Angeles and some of Molly's relatives in Calgary in Canada. They also travelled extensively in Spain to stay with old friends.

Ted was very sociable & enjoyed meeting and talking with people on a variety of subjects although his deafness did cause him some problems.

He liked to keep abreast of current affairs by reading the Daily Telegraph or watching the news on television and spent much time solving crosswords and Sudoku puzzles.

His wife Molly sadly died in January 2012.

Ted leaves behind his three children, six grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.