

05<sup>th</sup> January 2003 Island

# Remembering Mallory Wijesinghe from childhood at Pagoda House - another chapter closes

**Alfreda de Silva**

**T**his morning, Mallory, who is seven years old and his sister, Doreen, who like me, is five, will join us at morning prayers.

We are at Pagoda House where I live with grandmother, Rachel Wijesinghe, to go to school. The house has been built by Harry one of her sons.

Her eldest son, Edward, marries Maude Wickremasinghe, from a distinguished family. They live a short walking distance away from us with their children Merle, Mallory and Doreen.

Grandmother starts prayers with the hymn,

*"The king of love my shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never,  
I never lack if he is mine  
And I am His forever....."*

Then she reads Psalm 23 with its comforting assurances of goodness and strength. She talks to us about the Psalm. Then we kneel and she prays for her large family of children - eight of them, four sons and four daughters and their children's children, mentioning each one by name.

When prayers are over Mallory, Doreen and I, accompanied by Doreen's ayah go for a morning walk down the Pagoda Road. It is an unforgettable attractive red road lined with gnarled and twisted Kaduru trees.

Our first stop is the wooden bridge over the stream under which tiny fish glide in sunlight. Mallory is gentle and quiet, smiling radiantly. The mischievous, high-spirited Doreen picks a Kaduru fruit and drops it into the water. The ayah is restless for us to move on, the sun is hot but our pith hats protect us.

Where the red road enters the main road, Uncle Harry, the Proctor and Notary, not yet married, waits for us in his office with his associate, Mr. Welimitigoda. He has a treat there, of chocolates and lemonade. It is holiday time and we enjoy ourselves, before we go down the Mirihana Road, through Dewala Road, back to Pagoda Road. They see me home and Mallory and Doreen go to their's.

## Teaches at Royal College

Incidentally, in later life, uncle Harry teaches at Royal College and also serves as its Principle, after some time, Uncle Edward and Auntie Maude are caring loving people. Their's is a happy home with a strong sense of togetherness.

Often grandmother and I are invited to tea or lunch and we children sit and play 'snakes and ladders' or enjoy

working with building blocks while the grown-ups indulge in quiet conversation.

Mallory goes to Royal College, participates in its many activities and a strong Christian faith and a stable and wonderful home give him a significant family orientation that lasts him to the end of his days.

After his school career Mallory goes to England for his engineering studies. Having accomplished his goals he returns to work in his homeland.

## Marries Joyce

He marries Joyce, the daughter of Sir Oliver Goonetilleke and sister of Sheila. They have a happy and fulfilling marriage and three fine children - a daughter, Dr. Hiranthi who is the wife of Dr. Narendra Wijemanne and two sons and daughters-in-law, Eraj and Roshan and Sunil and Amala. The children of these families delight Mallory and they, in turn, are delighted with him.

Hiranthi, who has had a long and distinguished record of service with UNICEF is a great pride and joy to Mallory and Joyce. So are their sons. Their strong religious faith and their loyalty and co-operation with their father's plans for them in the notable business niche he has carried out for them strengthens family ties. In his unobtrusive but much appreciated way, Mallory served the community in several service organizations. He took a dynamic part in the Anglican Church in which he was raised and initiated challenging programmes for youth like the Toastmaster's Church.

He gave promising young people at his work place willing support and a purpose in life.

Mallory's long and happy life with Joyce ended with his death on December 26th which was also the sixty first anniversary of his wedding.

## Example of love

A poet once wrote. *"We are what our childhoods make us."*

All the rest is memory....." How true this is. Mallory's childhood was an example of love and steadfastness. His upbringing in his parental home and the many encounters he had with Grandma Rachel, added to his faith his inter-action with his people and the gentle sobriety of his ways. When his parents left on a holiday in England and he was still a teenager Mallory was left in the care of Auntie Lily and Uncle Harry at that time living at Pagoda House where grandmother Rachel also lived. And he spent time talking to her about many things. I heard her say to someone once, "My young grandson, Mallory

is an exceptional child. He makes our conversations so enjoyable. And this is also true of the time he spends with his maternal grandmother, Mary Wickremasinghe."

One of Mallory's great surprises for the Wijesinghe clan came in the mid-nineteen seventies. We were all invited to meet at the grave site of grandmother Rachel at Kanatte. It was a celebration of her Birthday, October fourth. After a short service there which Mallory conducted, in which we all shared with printed sheets distributed by him we met for a fellowship lunch at the Masonic Hall. There were speeches and a great spirit of camaraderie. He continued these warm and relaxing get-together on grandma Rachel's birthday for some time. His sense of humour and fun never left him.

And we prayed for and praised the spiritual life this frail, indomitable woman, not more than four feet ten inches tall, had inculcated in the families she had raised and inspired.

Mallory's loving interest in grandmother led him to an intensive research of her family tree a printed copy of which he supplied to every one of our families.

Grandma Rachel, whose eldest son was Mallory's father had three other sons - Harry, Richie and Percy and four daughters - Susan, Lily, Sarah and Millie of whom Sarah was my mother.

It was typical of Mallory that he had chosen our last celebration for grandmother Rachel at the historic Pagoda House some years ago. Living here at the time was Uncle Harry's daughter, whose husband, Rex Gunasekera, had pre deceased her.

In that abode of memories eighty of us of the Wijesinghe family participated in this celebration of praise and thanksgiving.

## Welcoming smile

The radiance of Mallory's welcoming smile and the way he related to people his simplicity and caring his always being where he was wanted, made him a very special person. Dozens of people from everywhere will never forget his many kindness and simplicity and faith.

These last characteristics are seen in his children.

When I offered my condolences to a sorrowing Hiranthi, she said to me "Auntie he was a good man." She was speaking for all of us and doing so will he inherent simplicity. Well might Mallory sing with the psalmist:

"Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever."