

My Auntie Marie was a very beautiful young lady with striking looks that were said to resemble the movie star Ava Gardner. A horrific cycle accident subsequently was to show her remarkable inner strength and resilience as she underwent numerous painful cosmetic surgery operations without complaint.

Marie and Cyril were sharing a house with my Mum and Dad in Karachi when I was born so she naturally became my first babysitter and a great comfort to the new mother. Unfortunately, I cannot verify the historical accuracy of these facts as my Mum the 'fountain of family knowledge' passed away two years ago so we will just have to rely on my patchy memory.

The RAF posted us all over the world but some of my fondest memories are of returning to Hillside Avenue in between our trips overseas and during holidays from boarding school. Marie and Cyril were the most generous and welcoming hosts and Keith, Laraine, Chris and I became temporary siblings to Ainsley and Allison for weeks or sometimes months as we waited for new housing or our next school.

Some of my most vivid recollections of those days are of lots of fun and laughter, especially Auntie Marie playing the piano and Uncle Cyril recounting the 'true stories' of his adventures at boarding school and tracking tigers in the jungle (we later learned these tales were borrowed from Rudyard Kipling).

Auntie Marie often maintained a slightly school ma'mish attitude which we quickly learnt was a harmless reflection of her role as a teacher and was possibly as a result of her strict upbringing.

Undoubtedly the regular highlight of our week was on Sundays after Mass when we were treated to a royal visit from Marie's very imposing mother simply known as Mrs X. It was a weekly ritual for us to gather around Marie and her mother to solve The Times crossword with my brother Keith being the 'teacher's pet' and running around fetching dictionaries, atlases and encyclopaedias as required. All this while Cyril worked his magic in the kitchen with just a dash too much of the cooking sherry.

My Auntie Marie had a heart of gold and we shall always be indebted to her for the warmth of her welcome, wise advice and loving friendship.

May she Rest in Peace.

Darryl Adams.