

Dear Readers

I have received so many pictures this month that for this issue only, MADNews has expanded onto The Back Page.

I am indebted to Christine Whild for her reminiscences of Jack and Elsa Spicer's life in Marcham. I am sure Elsa will continue to be part of the wider Marcham community, joining many others who receive their MADNews by post or read it on the web.

I hope you all have a great summer wherever you are.

Until next time....



Elsa Spicer, Anne and Margaret would like to thank everyone who has helped to make such a difficult time, following Jack's death, a little easier to bear. The love and kindness shown by so many people has been wonderful.

He would be amazed to know that he had affected so many lives in such a positive way as expressed so poignantly in the cards and letters that we have received. Thank you for those as well, they will all be treasured.

Elsa is going to live with Anne at 4, Medlar Lane, Greenhalgh, Preston PR4 3HR. Tel: 01253 876411.

Visitors, letters and phone-calls will be very welcome.

Needless to say, we will all miss Marcham very much and will be keeping up to date on MADNews web site.

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July/August 2006

SOME MEMORIES OF JACK SPICER

A chapter in the life of North Street is now closed. Jack Spicer, after a short illness, has died at the good age of 90. Elsa has moved north to live with daughter Anne and the house will now have new occupants. A page will turn.

What an example of village participation Jack and Elsa were, an example that those who knew them could do very well to follow. If you were new to the village, you came under Jack and Elsa's care and at events such as the Harvest Supper, held in the village hall opposite their house, you were networked into the village system, and you first met friends whom you might keep for the rest of your days in Marcham and beyond.

"Tamesis" is not a large house, but it had an exotic air, due to the many artefacts from Nigeria, where Jack and Elsa had spent twenty-seven years. Gatherings were often squashed into the sitting room, which was dominated by Jack's grand piano, or overflowed into the conservatory. Boxing Day was always "open house", with the old beams tastefully decorated with natural materials.

Jack and Elsa's parties were legendary. Elsa learned many years before to be aware of Jack's home-made brew, but guests merely noted how delicious the concoction was, and often over-indulged, as many in the village can testify! Besides, it was served with such panache by Jack from a beautiful silver punch bowl. I remember one year my three teenage sons being led to disaster, and propping each other up as they staggered up North Street. I believe that Jack was persuaded to water it down a little in subsequent years.

Jack was very fond of his garden and spent many hours tending it. He was a master at the art of composting, and his soil must be in very fine fettle. He had fine fruit trees, and a wonderful grape vine in his small greenhouse, and it was his great joy to be able to pick a ripe bunch of eating grapes, still with the bloom on them, and to bring this perfect gift to anyone in the village who might deserve such a treat, or who were sick. He loved his water garden too. It is round the side of the house, a small deep pond where for many years lived a friendly but solitary fish. Here the marginal plants such as *primula denticula* bloomed wonderfully each year. The house front too, was a sight to behold in May, with a carefully trained purple wisteria.

It was the two Church Choirs that Jack ran, that our family were most involved in. All

three boys benefited by Jack's wonderful leadership, and when an adult choir was formed, Victor joined as a tenor, and I as a soprano. It was in this choir that we were introduced to many wonderful anthems, and struggled to reach Jack's exacting standards in the singing of psalms, hymns, canticles and the like, His favourite radio programmes were "*Choral Evensong*" and the carols from King's College each year. Jack's many years as Organist and Choirmaster at both Marcham and Garford will never be forgotten by those regular churchgoers who admired his skill and his devotion to that weekly task.

When Marcham Players was formed, he and Elsa took a great interest, and he always attended the twice-yearly performances. He was occasionally cast as a "bit" player but found it difficult to learn words, and even if he only had one line, he sometimes got that one wrong! However, he was wonderfully cast as The Narrator in the history of the Village – "*The Son et Lumière*" which was performed in 1979. Here he could read from a script, and his beautiful deep voice was used to perfection. The "*Son et Lumière*" had been his idea, and one evening he took me to watch a similar idea in another village. This performance had sound, light and mime, and so the Marcham story was conceived in a similar way. The Church was packed for three evenings, an astonishing success. It was repeated some years later, again with Jack as The Narrator.

After Elsa was crippled following a knee operation, Jack took on many household duties, one of which was cooking. Though his repertoire may have been limited, his capacity for entertaining was boundless, and many of us in the village were invited on a regular basis for an evening meal. It was always roast chicken, with fruit crumble to follow, but it was always delicious and was served with such zest in the pleasure of the company. This he kept up almost to the end of his life. You weren't allowed to wash up, Jack preferring to do that mundane task once a day in the morning.

It is difficult to believe that we shan't see Jack walking around the village any more, but that he was so fit almost to the end is some consolation. It was a privilege to have known this wonderful English gentleman. No wonder he was awarded the title of "*Parishioner of the Year*" in 2005. I believe that somewhere he is now being given an even better accolade "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant*"

CHRISTINE WHILD