

## **Keith Bennett Memorial**

### **A Child's Life, Norie Miles**

A wonderful and famous lady once said "People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within." Here today we are, in a way, celebrating Keith's shining light, a shining light which was his happy-go-lucky attitude and cheeky grin.

Keith was born in St Mary's Hospital here in Manchester in 1952, the first of his mother's eight children. He lived his whole life in a small area of Manchester, and was a child of a turbulent period in English life - the late 50s and 60s. These were years of great change.

Keith went to Plymouth Grove School and enjoyed life in his family and in his local community.

Little moments in Keith's life highlight the simple wonder he had about the world. He loved collecting leaves which he kept in a scrap book. He would take to school to show his teacher. He also collected coins. His favorite was a King Edward 6th coin. It had a hole in the top. He used to take it everywhere.

His Gran bought him a bike but said he wasn't allowed on the road with it. Boys being boys, Keith disobeyed. Tears and sadness followed as the bike was taken away.

Keith was always there to help. He had a huge heart and would help anyone whenever he could. Winnie recalls the times with a smile when he cheerfully helped a blind person across the road.

Keith had many hobbies, from reading comics, marbles to playing football. He was a Manchester City supporter. He was also very fond of animals especially guinea pigs and he had a tortoise. He loved to listen to the Beatles songs on the radio.

Near home he used to go swimming in the Victoria Baths, sometimes with his mother. The week he was taken he had won a special certificate for swimming in a swimming gala.

I never met Keith. I didn't know him. But in the years I have known Winnie and her family I have learnt about the love for this boy, grown to learn about him and how he loved life. Learnt about his unconditional love for others. Learnt about his happy nature.

The lady who I quoted at the beginning was Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a highly spiritual lady who taught us so much about grieving. She also famously said "Death is the great clarifier; it shows us what is important."

In remembering Keith Bennett today we cannot forget how he died, but today we can bring to the front of our minds how he lived as a boy, and what is revealed today in all its clarity is how important he was to all those around him. Simply because he was a happy...wondrous...caring...helpful...and truly lovely Manchester boy. May he rest in peace.

