

**Alison Mary Wetterfors**  
**October 11, 1949 – February 8, 2022**

My closeness to Alison arises from the fact that in 1962, when Alison and I were both 12 years old, Alison's parents proposed that my parents and I come and live with her family in their house in Bearsden, a suburb of Glasgow. My father, who was about a decade younger than Alison's, had first met Archie and Virginia Hutchison when he was a student at Glasgow University. At that time, Alison's older sisters were small children, and Virginia was able to produce a photo from the mid-1930s of dad playing with the girls in the Hutchisons' back garden.

Though my father was Scottish, we had lived up to that point in a series of other countries, so my years at the Hutchisons were the years of my introduction to Scotland.

The community of Moral Re-Armament, in which Alison and I grew up, had a strong tradition of hospitality and indeed of sharing homes with other families. In the 1940s, Lesley's husband Ray lived with my American grandparents in Hollywood while attending Hollywood High School. And during the war years, Alison's mother and older sisters were welcomed into a series of homes in Ottawa for four years when they were evacuees from Scotland.

There is no question that Alison's birth came about as part of her parents' efforts to knit their family back together after the long separation of the war. The four older girls had been billeted in separate homes in Ottawa, and Archie, their father, found the separation from wife and daughters for four years almost more than he could bear. The war had tested them all. Alison was part of their new beginning.

A key part of Alison's life, perhaps especially when she was quite young, was processing the fact that she had four much older sisters. She wanted to feel the closeness of having sisters, and that was difficult because they were all leaving home just as she reached the age when she could fully connect with them. I probably underestimated, therefore, just what it was she felt when I arrived in Bearsden in 1962. She was pining for a pal of her own age. This feeling found expression in her frequent statement of regret that she had already been sent to boarding school before I arrived, and had I come sooner, the boarding school phase of her life would not have occurred.

Of course, in those first years I knew her, she felt strongly that with all these sisters there needed to be some weddings, and she got four of them in fairly rapid succession during the 1960s. Dad proposed the toast to the bride when Anne married Lewis Mackay; and less than a year later Alison and I were bridesmaids in London for Ruth's marriage to Archie Mackenzie, a fellow student of my dad at Glasgow University. Then came Lesley's wedding in the US, and Janet's in India. In the end, Anne and Alison were the only ones of the five married in Scotland.

Alison and I were very different temperamentally, so I think we were saved some stresses and strains by her being at boarding school. But both in her absence and when she was home, I benefitted from my place as the sixth sister of the family, joining Alison and her Dad for walks in the Scottish hills and being introduced to the lore of Scotland that was new to me. I discovered the bread rolls the Scots used for making sandwiches, typically stuffed with sardines or marmalade, and the requisite thermos of tea for any picnic. And heard stories of Archie and Virginia's youth – their meeting in amateur Gilbert and Sullivan productions, and Archie's dedication to the Scottish Mountaineering Club. I discovered the books of John Buchan, Lewis Grassie Gibbon, A.J. Cronin, Mary Stewart, and Helen McInnes, which all became favorites of Alison also. I learned Archie's insights about predicting Scottish weather: If it was a stunningly clear morning, he would shake his head and warn us that the weather was not going to be good that day. This seemed to my mother and me the height of pessimism, but in fact was rooted in sage experience.

Over the years, Alison and I shared memories of the household: the tea tray that Archie would set on the upstairs landing each early morning, with the teapot and green and yellow tea cozy that are as clear to me now as they were then, and the red and white cannister of digestive biscuits. The everyday green china. Serving platters referred to as "achets." My first experience of fish knives and forks. There was the ritual of keeping the coal fire going through the night in the "morning room," the BBC news on TV at 9 pm, when the family would gather. The last night of the London Proms. And Christmas, which always began with Archie bringing his rather basic record player out to the front hall and playing a Joan Sutherland recording of O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings to Zion. Virginia had started making the Christmas pudding months before and had prepared in addition a Christmas cake for afternoon tea to gild the Christmas meal – as if we hadn't already eaten quite a lot. The Queen's speech interrupting the meal and drawing us to the television. And at the end of the speech, the national anthem. Archie standing to attention and the rest of us following suit.

We shared the inherited mindset of our parents' generation. Both Archie and my father had found themselves fatherless at the end of the First World War and had grown up in a 1920s Scotland that had been utterly shattered by the war and the parallel social changes. Alison and I both knew that our respective fathers' way of being in the world had been set by the effects of this war, even if they expressed that in very different ways.

Virginia and Archie provided for their daughters a fine concoction of lighthearted humor and soulfulness that all the daughters inherited. The household exuded enthusiasm. There was a lot of music. And on Saturday evenings back when the four older girls were at home, there was Scottish dancing to music provided by BBC radio. Archie Hutchison's greatest enthusiasm was for his daughters. Whenever one of them came home, Archie would fly the Union Jack from the flagpole that rose from the front of the garage. He did that for me, incidentally, the day I first arrived in Scotland – a touching gesture. But that enthusiasm only barely beat out Archie's second great love - for the Scottish hills. He was a true romantic. He had climbed most of the Scottish peaks and had good tales to offer about those expeditions. I am sure that when Alison, or any of the others, think back to the house on Boclair Road, one constant memory is the view of the Campsie Fells seen so clearly from the kitchen and the drawing-room windows. And at the western end of the Campsies is one hillock standing on its own – Dumgoyne – which marks the place where Anne and Ruth now live, bringing the story around full circle.

Boclair Road runs along the top of a hill that affords a wide view of the area. The Romans had chosen this location to build the wall that would mark the northern boundary of their empire, and vestiges of the Antonine Wall, as it was called, can still be seen close to the Hutchisons' house. These ruins were well preserved in a cemetery just along the road and added a level of interest to evening walks. Now Archie and Virginia, their daughter Janet and her husband Miles (Douglas's parents) are buried there, giving us all additional good reason to go back and walk the cemetery again for old times' sake.... Something I have indeed done more than once on recent visits to Glasgow.

Of course there are a host of people, present and online, who have memories of Alison's singing, her humor, her enthusiasm and capability in the kitchen. Alison and I have memories of cooking together, singing together, Scottish dancing, road trips from Washington to Chicago, and, on the west coast, from Santa Barbara to

Monterey. When we were together in New Delhi as part of the musical Anything to Declare? the two of us, as so-called experienced cooks (aged 20), agreed to do the liaison with the people preparing food for the larger group and we had some delightful moments ironing out food crises with our Indian hosts. While in Delhi, we were billeted together in a series of homes over six weeks. It was the first time since leaving Scotland we had had such concerted time together in the midst of the hurly-burly of a traveling musical show. Alison, showing her typical courage, used the opportunity to broach the subject of the tensions between us and admitted she had been jealous of me. Of course, I had plenty of reason to be jealous of her, and that conversation became the basis of a truer friendship of mutual enjoyment and mutual respect.

I doubt if there was anyone more enthusiastic than Alison when Philip and I got engaged to be married. She knew Philip very well during his 30 years living in Sweden – he was at that time a fellow Brit married to a Swede. She may have been the person whose combined knowledge of the two of us was the greatest, and she faced her inability to be at our wedding with huge regret. Were it not for her illness, she would definitely have been there, and we missed her. She wrote a lovely, and indeed fairly lengthy, poem for us, recounting our many connections, finishing with the lines

*But firstly I am thankful for the greatest gift of all  
The fate that brought the Smiths to live beside the Roman Wall  
The extra sister I received, the bonds of friendship strong.*

I'm honored to have been considered a sister. Sisters, we know, can have their differences, can be jealous at one moment and enthusiastic about each other the next. They are thrown together by fate and not by choice. As the years went by, our sense of common heritage, our bonds, and our admiration for how each of us had coped with our lives grew stronger. Alison faced an enormous challenge in the final years of her life, and she faced it bravely, and in spite of the sense of sorrow and helplessness it gave me when I tried to support her, it was powerful to feel that as a sister and a friend I was part of the story.

Farewell, dear Alison. You take a part of me with you.

Margaret Tyndale-Biscoe  
March 4, 2022