

Israel (Nick) Smith

Born in 1935, into a Romany family in Grays Essex, to Phoebe and Joe Smith; Nick was the 3rd of 7 sons. It wasn't a particularly easy childhood, the family were bombed out of 2 houses during the war, which led his father Joe, to come up to Suffolk and buy some land in Melton - now named Smithfields - just opp Fairhead and Sawyer.

Following the family tradition, they moved out of the home each spring, to work in the fields and come harvest time, Nick would be fruit picking and hop picking, before returning to Melton for the winter.

Aged 18 Nick went into the army- as part of National Service. He was in the Military Police and had a wonderful collection of stories to tell - one of his favourites was about when he took prisoners back to camp, he would let them off their handcuffs for a while; luckily they all came back!

When he came out of the army, he found work on various construction sites and it was the erecting of the pylons - just up the road from here - that brought him to Grundisburgh - where he was to meet Elizabeth and fall in love. He and Liz were married here in this church, 50 yrs ago last Dec - I know as a family you had a fabulous party to celebrate - and it was great and good occasion that you have those happy memories to look back on.

Family was to follow - Julie - Donna - Tina- Debbie and then after a little while along came Mark. Family was everything to Nick - he came from a large family and he liked nothing better

than to be surrounded by family. You could always guarantee that parking was in short supply on a Sat afternoon, in Cranworth Close, as Nick and Liz had open house and the family would all pile round. With 5 children, and their partners, 4 grand-daughters and 4 grandsons - family was supremely important. Liz writes of Nick "that was his life, being with family".

In 2010 and again in 2011, Nick underwent serious back surgery, which from that point on affected his mobility, but he didn't let it stop him from getting out and about, right up until the day he went into hospital. He was in Ips Hospital for 3 weeks, but never a day went by when he didn't have family to visit - there was always someone there with him - and when he passed peacefully away- family were all around him - surrounding him with love.

In the village, he was often seen around in his lorry- well known in these parts by many local businesses and factories collecting their scrap materials and recycling them - you could say he was the Grundisburgh Re-cycling King - he took it seriously and was ahead of his time!

When at home- it was cowboy films and nature programmes that he liked to watch; country music was what he liked to listen to, but what he thought about Eastenders is probably not repeatable!

He had a fascination and great interest in airplanes and enjoyed visiting local airfields - Duxford, Flixton, Parham and Debach.

He liked to sit in the garden and watch the birds, but a gardener he was not- yet it was always Nick when he heard of someone's passing who would say "we must send them some flowers" and today we are here in church surrounded by flowers.

We are here just a few days after Easter, the great Christian festival, that celebrates that whether in life or in death, we are never alone- God is always with us. Flowers are a great symbol of the Easter faith - planted as seeds you could never guess by looking at a seed alone, what the flower will look like when it bursts forth from the ground; flowers are a symbol of the risen life, that is promised to us by God; It was in a garden that Jesus met Mary on the first Easter morning; he spoke her name and she recognised him and tho previously she had thought he was just the gardener, she knew him to be the risen Lord.

God has spoken Nick's name - but of course, you all know that Nick was his preferred name, but his original name was Israel and in the biblical story, Israel was God's chosen people- the ones whom he led out of slavery to freedom in the promised land. God has called Nick/Israel to freedom and to the life that lies beyond death. He has called Nick home- to be with him- to rest in his peace- just as Nick often took his ease and rested in the garden and watched the birds.

May he rest in peace and may you know the peace of God that is here for you- surrounding you- upholding you- now and always. Amen.