

Old Friends

By Jan Rees

This photograph was taken a few years ago when my oldest friend came to visit. Her name is Juliet or “Jool” as she has always been known. We met when we both arrived at Teacher Training College back in the sixties. Jool was to train on the Junior/Secondary course while I had opted for the Infant/Junior course.

At that time each student teacher chose a main subject to study at their own level alongside the many things we had to study in order to teach our chosen age group. Both Jool and I chose Speech and Drama, as we both loved the magical world of theatre and performance. During our time at the college we were involved in several productions together. One of them was a play about the relationship between Queen Anne and the Duchess of Marlborough. I hasten to add that our play did not suggest that their relationship was anything like the one in the recent film “The Favourite”. Jool played the queen and I played the duchess. One of the things I enjoyed about playing that part was that I had the chance to wear a replica of a beautiful 18th century court dress in petrol blue brocade with a cream silk bodice and underskirt, embroidered with gold thread. I felt like a duchess. Rehearsals were always hilarious because we shared the same sense of the ridiculous and I remember a lot of laughter. One of the silly things we often did to amuse ourselves was to see what alternative uses we could find in common objects. One day, in the kitchen on our block, Jool picked up a couple of the wooden slats from a drying cabinet, provided for our laundry. These were about 2 feet long and she tucked them under her arms like a couple of knitting needles, saying “Knit one, purl one.” My response was to pick up a



curved banana from the fruit bowl and holding it like a telephone, passed it to her, saying “It’s for you”.

Once we qualified Jool and I started teaching and living in different parts of the country. She had a spell out of teaching when she tried banking but it wasn’t for her. Banking’s loss was certainly teaching’s gain. Jool has many interests, one of them being choral singing. She sang with the prestigious Silver Ring Choir of Bath for a time, even taking a part in an octet on one of their CD’s. She has also been a determined fund raiser, organising events for the local branch of the RNIB, as her late husband was partially sighted.

We have kept in touch over the years mainly by letter and phone calls but also by occasionally meeting up in London. More recently email has made it easier to communicate.

Our lives have taken very different paths but we have always supported each other in good times and bad and have always been able to share some laughter.

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