

Dear Readers,

Welcome. My name is Ted, the husband of Keeney Weldon: I want to tell you the story of how she got her rather unusual name. She was born August 14th 1943 as Kathleen Anne Ryan in the small city of Cortland in the middle of New York State in America.

When she grew older she went to the University of Cortland then taught in a Primary School there. She remained Kathleen until her youngest brother came along and when he tried to say Kathleen it came out as Keeney and her sister Christine's name as Nini. Family and friends thought this was rather fun so the nicknames stuck.

Although Keeney travelled to other countries on holiday she continued to work in Cortland until 1976 when she came to the United Nations School in the new part called Pregny, where I was already working. Since we both taught Year 2 we had a lot to talk about as teachers and soon became good friends.

Keeney came on a one year "exchange" programme and so was due to leave in 1977. She asked the Directrice, Mrs Joyce Wakenshaw, for another year's contract and was granted it, much to everyone's pleasure; especially mine!

By this time the United Nations School had become the Pregny-Rigot Unit of the International School of Geneva and we were very much in love. However, it was impossible to renew Keeney's "one year" contract for a third year so I asked her to marry me. This I did on a Friday evening and I then spent a very long week-end when she refused to see me but spent her time (and a lot of money; hers thankfully) phoning her family and friends asking advice. This was a big step for Keeney: I had long since decided to see as much of the world as I could on a young teacher's pay by working my way but Keeney was more of a "homebody".

At last on Sunday night Keeney gave me her positive answer; much to our mutual delight and that of our families, friends, students and parents. We were married August 5th 1978 in Cortland and, although we were able to afford our wedding night in a smart hotel, we spent the rest of our honeymoon camping in the very beautiful New England states.

When we returned to Geneva Mrs Wakenshaw was only able to offer Keeney a place as classroom assistant in the Nursery School at Rigot where she was very happy doing a new kind of teaching job. Soon she was offered a place in Year 2 at "La Châtaigneraie". Thanks to Keeney's determination to live in our own home we moved, in 1984, to a house in Vich, closer to "La Chât". She went on to teach other classes, to gain more experience and ended up in Class 5; where she read the "Harry Potter" books long before they became famous.

As a stickler for cleanliness it became clear early on that Keeney should take care of the cleaning and I would look after the cooking.

Except on special occasions when Keeney's excellent cakes and cookies were a must.

Our "fairy tale" romance was complete... until disaster struck in the form of the illness called cancer. Keeney was successfully operated on but as an after-effect of the treatment she lost all of her beautiful golden blonde hair. She was given a very good wig, almost like her own hair. She wore it for a while but when her own hair began to grow back she refused to wear it because it made her scalp itch. So she went around the school with very short hair in what is called a "crew cut". No-one laughed; no-one made fun. Everyone admired a lady with such courage that she could walk around the school knowing that both students and parents cared for her. She continued to take private French lessons when going out became too much for her.



Keeney's hair grew back as a beautiful pale blonde, which she did not like and threatened to have it coloured golden again. I told her she was still beautiful and threatened to wear a wig or grow what was left of my hair into a pony-tail! She relented and all was fine until... disaster struck again! This time in her brain. The doctors could operate but I think she knew that this was the beginning of the end. Keeney never complained. I used to visit her twice a day and tell her about my Primary Reception Class and then read her poems. I'm not sure how much sunk in towards the end but I hope it helped ease her passing.

Keeney died peacefully in her sleep at 08h00 July 1st 2001.

At the funeral several people came up to tell me that the church (which seemed pretty full to me) would have been fuller if it had not been the first week of the holiday. Others came to say that they hadn't realized Keeney was a natural blonde until they saw her hair growing back again. I can assure you that she was with the greenest, most beautiful eyes I've ever, in 34 years of teaching, seen.

I have remained in contact with her loving, lovely family to this day. I visit them and/or some of them visit me most years.

Keeney and I had many differences, a case of opposites being attracted to each other. But three things we did share was love of each other, love of children and love of books.

*Read on,
Ted*

P.S. The Primary School Library was named for Keeney in 2001 and her photograph was displayed.