

Cherry Schroder had an enormous heart.

There was space in it for every Boys High boy.

But those of us in the 1997 matric group like to think she had a special place in her heart for us. She proved it a few weeks ago by insisting, through her tracheal intubation, that Bill leave her side in the ICU to come to our 20 year on reunion dinner.

We were so grateful to have him there.

It was a typical moment – Cherry putting herself aside because she knew that Bill's presence would mean so much to us and to him.

Whenever Bill happens to do the right thing, you will usually find Cherry made it happen.

So I am honoured that the Schroder family has asked me to write something in memory of our beloved Cherry.

I am sad and sorry not to be able to be there in person today to read this myself, but Peter Dittberner has agreed to do so on behalf of our year.

Because Peter is from School House, I have used short words and simple sentences.

My relationship with Cherry really began after Bill plucked me from obscurity and made me the head of school.

She was there to offer me a chair as my legs buckled beneath me when he told me, at their house on the top of the hill.

And I seem to remember she gave me a beer too, and assured me that I wouldn't be immediately removed from office if I drank it.

From that moment, Bill and Cherry's house became a second home for me at the school.

Cherry told me that I could come for supper or a talk at any time.

She knew that I would be lonely and isolated after joining the authority structure of the school.

I took her up on the offer many times.

Her kindness without judgment, her open heart, and her friendship was essential in getting me through that year.

She and Bill opened their home to me and gave me a place of refuge, for which I will be forever grateful.

She also had a wicked sense of humour.

The Schrodgers had me to dinner with my new girlfriend (who I was trying to impress).

At some point in the dinner I noticed that Cherry was giggling.

They had given the poor young lady a prank glass with a hole in the rim.

Every time she tried to take a sip, liquid went dribbling down her front.

I don't know whose idea it was, but Cherry was a willing accessory.

She was someone with utterly clear priorities: her family, her pets, her school. She was fiercely loyal.

The last time I saw her was at the opening of the Bill Schroder Media Centre. We sat on a bench in the library and had a long talk.

She was absolutely not interested in telling me how she was or talking about her health.
She wanted to hear about my life, my children, my parents.

I will always remember her wicked laugh;
her utter joy in life;
her ability to love;
her huge generous heart.

Cherry we love you and are going to miss you.

Nick Ferreira