

Snapshots
My mother, captain of our ship and crew

This photograph is of my family in the summer of 1920 in the garden in Lockdown, Hampshire. My step-grandmother, Heidi, was sitting from behind with her youngest son (the right). The mother of the time my mother was an only parent, my father arrived home infrequently and then not at all for a year or half in the time sailing from Southampton.

I am sitting on Heidi's lap with my mother, Anna, standing behind. My brother, Arthur, is the left aged seven, Raymond is the older boy aged five and little Dick aged three.

Mother worked very hard to keep her family fed and clothed. She gave piano lessons, did the hair at home, and for a time played for the Stage Players cinema. We relied on the 2d shillings per week paid for each child until we reached 12 and left school.

Life for Mother was very hard, with no electricity or running water, but we too had a carefree childhood, climbing trees, playing games and helping to pick the local crop of strawberries in the summer.

At 14, Arthur worked at the laundry; he was a pale, undernourished boy, who was often blamed for one of the family washed items. He joined the Royal Navy and later wrote a book about his wartime experiences.

At 17, Raymond joined the army and during the second world war became one of the soldiers rescued from Dunkirk. Later, in true family tradition, he wrote about his time in the service. After the war, he worked on the buses and became a member of the Queen Mary.



Snapshots ... Here (foreground) on her step-grandmother Heidi's lap in 1920. Her mother, Heidi, stands behind. Her brothers, from left, are Arthur, Dick and Raymond. Right, Heidi's youngest son, Dick, with

At 14, Dick started work for a farming family in nearby The Hamlet and three joined the navy in 1918. His step-grandmother, Heidi, was used to corruption in a higher class. Like both her older brothers, he survived the war and still has a remarkable memory.

I was a home during the war in Southampton. I have been a writer and photographer since my 20s and at 80 I don't intend to stop just yet. (More snapshots)

I had a gut-wrenchingly depressing childhood. It was the early 80s, so I guess a contemporary soundtrack of woe should have included the most melancholic, angst-ridden Smiths' and Depeche Mode songs.

But one day, again, I found myself banned from watching television, so was made to stand outside the dining room. My body had to be as bolt upright as a soldier trooping the colour (no leaning against the wall) and, as ever, the punishment meant staying in this position for hours on end. I don't recall what had set off my adoptive "parents" this time, but it didn't take much to induce an irrational rage.

However, I could still see through the crack in the door. And then, kismet, it happened: I saw five photogenic guys wearing voguish Antony Price suits cavorting on a yacht in the limpid blue waters of the Caribbean. I was hooked, a bona fide Duranie.

It wasn't just the uplifting tune with its catchy melody and spicy sax; momentarily, the stylish, glossy video whisked me off to another place. And, for sure, I needed a hefty dose of escapism from the regular bouts of mental and physical abuse that were meted out at home. Yet something inside me changed when I first heard Rio, especially because of one particular line: "And I might find her if I'm looking like I can". I now felt, I can't really explain why, that there was a way out of my situation, and that somewhere, out there, there was some type of future ...

And there was. As an aspiring writer I got to meet Simon Le Bon - the group's lead singer - a few times and I asked him about Rio and being on that boat. Little did he know that that song helped me, metaphorically, from being chucked overboard.

Xav Judd

Playlist
How Duran Duran showed me the way

Rio by Duran Duran
"Her name is Rio and she dances on the sand / Just like that river twisting through a dusty land / And when she shines she really shows you all she can / Oh Rio, Rio dance across the Rio Grande"