

A wake up call for everyone through one woman's deeply personal  
Journey

In conjunction with

**Grandparents' Association week:**

**18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2006.**

Sheila Steptoe is an ordinary lady with an extraordinary story. Expelled from public school twice as a teenager in the 60's and thumbing her way around Europe for three years as a young woman, it was clear from the start that Sheila Steptoe's life was never going to be one for the faint of heart. Returning to the UK in the 70's to settle down to a life not-so-ordinary, the road proved rockier than even Sheila could have imagined.

Sheila has coped with all that life has thrown her way, from bringing up a daughter with epilepsy and severe dyslexia, coming through skin cancer and reconstructive surgery that went wrong, losing her husband to an affair and, devastatingly, being separated from her granddaughter as the result of a family dispute.

Committing her experiences to paper in the hope of bringing support and encouragement to others, Sheila explains how she came to terms with life's bumpy patches and has even managed to keep smiling throughout. Written as a letter to her children, ***Before I Get Old and Wrinkly!*** is an intensely personal and touching account of the experiences that have affected her and, which could affect *any one* of us. She conveys especially the importance for us all to ensure that we truly understand the significance of getting to know our family and friends properly as people, instead of merely taking their presence for granted.

### **Dealing with separation from a grandchild**

Sheila had built an incredibly close bond with her granddaughter, Simone, and was devastated when she was suddenly and unexpectedly cut out of her life as the result of a series of minor, typical family disputes. Feeling helpless and alone, Sheila didn't know where to turn following this heart-breaking separation. In her desperation, Sheila discovered The Grandparent's Association, one of only two organisations in the UK specifically designed to support the relationship between grandparent and grandchild. The charity provided the advice and support Sheila was unable to find elsewhere. Since

her experience, Sheila has gone on to become a volunteer for the organisation, which from 18<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September will be celebrating Grandparents' Association Week, in the hope of raising awareness of the charity and its continuing fight to change grandparents' rights. Her book, ***Before I Get Old And Wrinkly!*** is also the first to deal with the issues involved in this often overlooked but fundamental relationship between children and their grandparents, including the importance of this bond, how it affects the children and how to cope with loss of contact and separation. The brilliant new edition contains details of Sheila's struggles throughout the separation and how, through her continued efforts, she was reunited with Simone after two seemingly endless years.

With 40% of all children in England now born to unmarried parents, grandparents are playing an increasingly significant role in their lives. The relationship is one that needs to be recognised and supported. Although the grandparent's Association was able to support and reassure Sheila throughout her separation from Simone, at present, grandparents still have no rights when it comes to their grandchildren. Over one million children are denied contact with their grandparents and it is estimated that up to 60% of families in the UK will undergo an experience similar to Sheila's.

#### **ABOUT SHEILA STEPTOE**

Sheila Steptoe is a young grandmother who is not yet old inside or out. She grew up in England in the swinging 60's and hitched her way around Europe in the 70's with nothing but her backpack, her thumb and a group of willing female friends. She spent most of her working life at *The Observer* and *Sunday Times* before moving on to work for her local newspaper in Chelmsford, Essex. It was her life experiences and her own journey however, which brought her to her life's vocation of counselling and life coaching. Putting her experiences to paper in the hope of supporting others, Sheila has once again completely changed her own life. She now runs her own successful business, Aspirations4u, giving talks and running workshops all over the country to help others take the first steps to their own path of self-discovery and get the most out of their own lives. She is also a regular contributor to *Healthy Life, Mind, Body & Soul*. Take a look at her website: [www.aspirations4u.com](http://www.aspirations4u.com).

Sheila Steptoe is available for interview and to talk further about any of the issues raised above. For further information, to receive a review copy of her book, ***Before I Get Old and Wrinkly!*** or to arrange an interview with Sheila, please contact Rebecca Law on 0791 915 8892 or email [Rebecca@summertimepublishing.com](mailto:Rebecca@summertimepublishing.com)

***Before I Get Old and Wrinkly!*** (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) is published by Authorhouse on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September at £11.49

For more information on The Grandparents' Association, visit: <http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk/index.asp>