



Shirley with her
great-granddaughter
Cali in 2015.

ROS
Christmas
Appeal

“Knowing the Helpline was there in the run-up to Christmas was such a comfort to Grandma Shirley.”

Dear Supporter,

November 2023

Christmas meant everything to my Grandma, Shirley. Nothing brought her more joy than gathering her family together. Aunties, uncles, grandchildren. Everyone was invited. She was a born hostess and full of fun. She and Grandpa would even coordinate their red Christmas jumpers! All she wanted was to make everyone happy at this special time of year.

So when, in later life, her osteoporosis affected her more and more, it was sad to see the meaning of Christmas change for her. It still meant family, joy and togetherness, but it also meant extra worry and pressure. She'd be afraid of tripping over presents or falling over people's feet. Though she loved holding her great-grandchildren, the fear of spinal fractures made her constantly wary, and she'd worry about dropping them.

Christmas can be a time of fear for people affected by osteoporosis. But it's something we simply don't talk about enough. That's why ROS asked me to write and share my family's story with you today.



**Shirley and her husband Alan
in their Christmas jumpers.**

My Grandma's osteoporosis started many years ago. I was just a girl, but I remember she had a bad fall in the garden. She broke both her wrists and had to crawl on her elbows to get help. Once she'd been diagnosed she was always very careful, constantly holding onto my Grandpa's arm for fear of falling over.

As time went on, Grandma became more and more hunched. I've seen wonderful photos of her in her youth – she was tall, elegant and loved to dance – so it must have been hard to feel herself getting more fragile. She used to mark everyone's heights on a doorframe in her house. As her beloved grandchildren grew ever taller, the opposite happened to her. I think she found that really hard.

But, do you know, I never heard her complain. Not once in all those years. I think it's that generation: hardy and stoic. She was proud of her independence and never wanted her family to see her feeling sad.

I believe the ROS Helpline was crucial to helping my Grandma stay positive throughout her later years. She would often turn to those amazing nurses to help get her through difficult times. **By giving today to the ROS Christmas Appeal, you could help bring that same reassurance and hope to someone else affected by osteoporosis, and their family.**

Please continue...

After she had a fall, she'd be straight onto the Helpline, asking the nurses for support. How long might it take for her injury to heal? What would help with the pain? When could she get back to normal? After visiting the consultant, she would often write down questions and then ask the Helpline nurses for clarification or more information. Their guidance was so important to her.

I know that Grandma also got in touch with the Helpline whenever she had to travel. Even though she was frail in her later years, she was determined not to miss out on family holidays. She would ask the nurses about how to store her medications on the plane, or whether she needed written letters from her doctor. They helped her in so many different ways.

For me and the rest of her children and grandchildren, it was so comforting to know that Grandma had access to this wonderful support. Though we'd have done anything in the world for her, I know she didn't want to burden us, and often we didn't have the information she needed. I think that's what makes the Helpline so special. It's a vital service that benefits an entire family, not just the person who has osteoporosis.

Unfortunately, I know the Helpline can't reach everyone who needs this critical support. We hear from Vivienne, a specialist Helpline nurse who says that around 250 calls each month are missed during Helpline opening hours because of a lack of resources. Will you help with a donation today? A donation from you could help another nurse like Vivienne answer calls in the run-up to Christmas. Please give whatever you can spare today.



There are only four specialist nurses on our Helpline at any one time.



Clare with her daughter Cali, now aged 10.

I can't imagine Grandma going without the support that gave her so much reassurance and hope. I'm sure you wouldn't want anyone to miss out on the help they urgently need, so please give whatever you can. It would mean so much to families like mine in the run-up to Christmas.

Sadly, our Grandma Shirley passed away a few years ago, but none of us will ever forget her wonderful smile and sheer love of life and us, her family. In fact, when my 10-year-old daughter Cali did a fundraising challenge recently, she chose to raise money for ROS to help others with osteoporosis. Even though she's so young, Cali knows exactly how much the Helpline nurses meant to her beloved great-gran.

As for me, I really wanted to support other people like Grandma Shirley by writing this letter to you today. By sending a donation, you could help another family like mine enjoy Christmas for what it should be. A special time of joy and togetherness, free from worry and fear.

With my warmest regards and thanks,

Clare

Clare, Shirley's granddaughter

