

## **Dad – Celebration of Life**

You've heard from Karen & Anne about their memories of Dad, I would like to add to those with some of my own memories through the years. There are so many, so these are just a few....

As a young child growing up in the hamlet of Whitecross in Cornwall I can remember that Dad was a magnet for the neighbourhood children, playing in the garden, in the paddling pool, using the wheelbarrow to push us all around. It wasn't just children who were drawn to him, I remember my Great Aunt TT, who had Downs Syndrome adored him and after a little coaxing from Dad enjoyed nothing more than pulling her best face to show off her one remaining tooth.

I think of the cycle rides that he used to take Anne & I and Dougie Evans on – we would start from home and do a loop through Polmorla and back home – I am convinced to this day that he somehow managed to defy science and make the entire ride uphill!

Anne has talked about sailing in Padstow and his beloved Minnehaha – I'm afraid that my memories of this time consist mainly of the underside of the foredeck, where I was cowering in abject terror...Dad's definition of a 'gentle breeze' and a 'slight swell' seem to bear no relation to the howling gales and treacherous seas that I saw!

Dad is also responsible for my love of the funny little French cars – the Citroen 2CV when he introduced us to 'Boggy' his new bright yellow 2CV when we returned from a visit to our Grandparents in Paris, I was initially disappointed that it wasn't a Diane – like our Grandmother had in France....I soon got over that disappointment. Nowadays children are strapped tightly in their seatbelts in the back seat of the car for safety reasons – not for Anne & I, Boggy's back seat was for standing on with the roof rolled back and our upper bodies out of the top with the wind in our hair.

In the winter, when it snowed, Dad used Boggy to tow us over the snow drifts on the wooden toboggan that, obviously, he had built us himself.

It was in 1979 that Dad took the huge step of moving to Fiji – as a child of 8 years old, this was pretty devastating – but Dad wrote letters individually to Anne & I religiously every single week.

It was on our first visit to Dad in Fiji that I was introduced to the Hash House Harriers – as I now know a suitably fun irreverent international organisation with the slogan ‘a drinking club with a running problem’....my first Hash I remember well for two reasons, finishing on Dad’s shoulders after he had run back to find me struggling, and I believe it was also my first beer not watered down with lemonade, my reward for finishing...a stubbie of Fiji Bitter.

On that first trip to Fiji Anne & I met lots of Dad’s new friends – I particularly remember an American called Lyn, Karen Giblin and another American called Karen Edwards (who became horribly ill after assisting Dad picking some Mangos outside her home).

Dad always said that I never followed his advice (until about a year or so later, when I had realised that he was right!),...that wasn’t always true, I distinctly remember him telling me before he moved to Fiji – Michael, take my advice, NEVER marry a woman! I have followed that advice – however, you can imagine my surprise when he telephoned from Fiji to say that he was getting married to Karen.

After a few years back in the UK in Cornwall – Dad & Karen were off on their next adventure – to Botswana. I visited many times and on each visit was a safari trip to the remote African wilderness.

Now Dad assured Anne & I that we were quite safe sleeping in our tents at night – lions hunt by sight, he told us, not smell....it should also be noted that our tents were sewn up, by Karen, with dental floss, having been shredded by baboons! The only reason that he and Karen slept in the Landrover was due to Karen’s ‘irrational’ fear of lions....that irrational fear seemed pretty rational to me lying in my tent at night hearing the lions roaring and the hyenas howling!

On these trips Dad was always concerned with safety - the safety of the Landrover – so at a water crossing, I was sent to wade through first to check the depth...never mind that there may be Aligators lurking in the depths – Karen assured me that she waded

across too, I didn't remember this...but she has since shown me photographic evidence!

It was on the way to one of these trips that Dad was caught 'Drink Driving' ....no, not what you are thinking! We were driving along in the Landrover, it was a hot and dusty drive and we were all enjoying a cold beer, when we came to one of the regular Police road blocks to check the safety of the car (flash your light, beep your horn and the car is safe!). The Policeman pointed at Dads can of beer and said "you must not drink and drive" so Dad handed his can of beer back to me. The policeman then said ...no, no – I know what you will do, as soon as you drive off he will give you back your beer – you must finish it now – you must not drink and drive! He made dad finish his beer before he would let us drive on!

Another memorable moment in Botswana was the look on Dads face one lunchtime when he'd come home from work for lunch....I had a pretty good social life in Botswana, so when the phone rang, he said – Mike, you answer that, it'll be for you. When I answered the phone the gentleman on the other end asked to speak to Peter Collins – Me ah yeah ok, who's calling? Quet, Quet Masiri....Dad...some guy called Quet on the phone for you, he grabbed the phone pretty quickly, it was the President of Botswana.

As most of you will know – Dad was great at 'fixing things' be it cars, bikes or Ethne's toys. He could never really understand why I didn't pay more attention and want to learn how to do these things from him. Indeed a few times I did try, but I could never last more than a few minutes....for Dad, in order to fix things, there had to be copious amounts of bad language....my nerves just couldn't take it!

About 18 months ago, when I was living in Wellington on the river, my next door neighbours had a sailing dinghy (that rather annoyingly they had paid a case of beer for!), They had never put it on the water. Because they had seen me taking the little boat that Dad built out, they asked me if I could help them get it set up for a sail....I tried, said that I couldn't work it out, but that I knew a man who could!....Dad. Dad & Karen came down the next day – after a bit of fiddling, not much swearing, and rummaging in his tool box, the boat was launched and Dad & I took it for a sail as the sun was setting. That will always remain a special memory, it was

my last sail with Dad, and I think Dad's last sail...the boat, I doubt it has been in the water again since!

He was a thoroughly good, kind and generous man, always keen to do 'the right and decent thing' and to live life to the full – but I do know, as will Ethne, Gemma, Campbell & Matthew, that it was a constant disappointment at the Normanville Christmas camps that he never got to meet Father Christmas. Every time that Father Christmas paid a visit, Grumps was having a nap in the caravan, only to wake up after Father Christmas had gone.

Dad, you are and will be desperately missed, but you have left behind a treasure trove of memories, knowledge & experience for all of us.

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