

Allan Brent Ashworth

05/02/55 – 17/03/13

Entry Music - The Theme to Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid - Bob Dylan

Good afternoon and on behalf of Karen, Sarah, Jenny, Kerry, Bekah and Jack I welcome you to this ceremony to celebrate the life and to mark the passing of Allan Brent Ashworth. Karen would particularly like to thank Allan's first wife, Clare, for being here today to lend her support.

As well as his five children Allan leaves three grandchildren, Isabel, Oliver and Samuel.

In keeping with his own beliefs, the family have chosen to have a humanist funeral for Allan.

Although this means that we won't say sing hymns or say prayers together please be assured that the beliefs of everyone present are respected and that we will have a time for reflection a little later on when those of you who do have a faith may like to offer private prayer.

My name is Croianna Bradshaw, I am a celebrant from the British Humanist Association and it is my great privilege to lead this ceremony for Allan but it is the family, the people who knew and loved him best, whose voices you will hear speaking about Allan today.

I would like to invite Bekah, Jack and Mick to come to the lecturn to speak about Allan's younger years.

Being the youngest, Jack and I were given the task of talking about dad in his younger years. To help us with this we looked through both his baby book (written by his parents Elsie and Jack) along with as many school reports as we could find.

In later life dad was a really hard worker, Elsie told us a few days ago that he was exactly the same at school. We tried to find evidence of this in his school reports when we found this really telling extract 'Allan is a very promising pupil, he works hard and has a lively mind', more importantly we found this 'Allan is a useful member of the under 14s cricket 11'.

He also had a strong influence on our diets as we grew up, as he does on that of his grand children, reflected here in this extract from his baby book taken just before his second birthday 'Allan's favourite foods these days are anything and everything, but perhaps custard tops the list and he also eat plenty of cabbage and potatoes.

In his later life Allan could always be found making things in his shed, and then meticulously cleaning up afterwards. This clearly isn't a trait that developed over time, as we discovered from this extract taken from when dad was 3 year old 'best of all Allan likes to sweep the paths and pavements and mend things with his hammer.

Mick, as Allan's oldest and closest friend, will now say a few words about him growing up.

Thank you Bekah and Jack.

I feel especially lucky to have grown up with Allan. As we have heard, Allan was a hard worker in school, but not at the expense of enjoying life.

Our days together at Arnold School in Blackpool were formative, leaving a lasting impression and inspiring the eloquence that Allan developed and demonstrated when I asked him years later "Did you enjoy school?"

"No, it was shit." he replied. He loved the cricket, but hated everything else.

Outside school, as one of 7 or 8 close friends we enjoyed what remained of the 60's and saw in the 70's. Together we discovered we shared a love of those things that bound us as friends; jazz music, the Rolling Stones, Spike Milligan, left wing politics, snooker and Boddingtons Bitter.

Came the time for uni, and Allan off to Nottingham. Choice of university was important to Allan, and the ratio of female to male students seemed to be the key selection factor.

At Nottingham the direction of his life began to emerge. He built a mad contraption consisting of test tubes, metal piping, Bunsen burners, mercury and glass flasks. After a very long visit to the Trip to Jerusalem Allan proclaimed it 'a breakthrough in nuclear science', and managed to persuade someone to give him a PHD as a result.

Ever since my initial tears at the news of Allan's passing, my memories of him bring nothing but inner smiles and laughter, and that will stay with me forever.

Our next speaker is Karen, who will share with us her thoughts about Allan as a professional and as a husband.

That PhD was in sodium chemistry and led him into the nuclear industry where spent his whole career, taking great satisfaction from his contribution to keeping people safe. He was proud of what he did as production manager, pollution inspector and consultant – and delighted particularly in his involvement with the RIMNET monitoring network and in his favourite job title, as Radioactive Waste advisor to the London Olympics.

It has been absolutely lovely to read the tributes which have arrived, and kept arriving, from Allan's colleagues – all the more so because I am also an ex-colleague: of all the potential romantic meeting places in the world, we chose... Sellafield!

I have to say that our children are rather less respectful than perhaps they should be of Allan's professional standing – to them the title Chartered Radiological Protection Professional just presents a slightly wicked opportunity to wonder why anyone would apply for a title that risks letters which spell 'CRaP' appearing after their name.

Outside work, Allan's interests were enormously wide-ranging:

- We have Napoleon's entire army in little lead soldiers marching through our attic; all lovingly painted by Allan with historical details painstakingly researched.

- Allan enjoyed a wide range of music, and was a huge supporter of the various choirs and orchestras that our children have belonged to over the years; most recently the Mid Sussex Brass Band, where Jack plays the tuba.

- In sport, no tribute could be complete without mention of cricket! In pre-Sky days, we were one of those households where the TV sat permanently tuned to the Ceefax scorecard. Although Allan no longer played, he loved to watch Jack's various teams and had recently qualified as an umpire in order to take a bigger role at the St Andrews club.

- Allan also loved to write and it is with some of his writing that I would like to finish. This is an extract from a piece about household tasks which he wrote, both for and about me, a couple of years ago. It is entitled "Can I help?" and appeared by way of explaining the jobs he didn't do. I think it gives a lovely flavour of Allan as a husband.

"[My wife] bought some new dinner plates the other month, but they won't fit in the dishwasher. This is my fault, despite the fact that I didn't choose the plates or the dishwasher. I was ten miles away at the time of both purchases..."

He continues:

"[My wife] has inherited a particular habit from her own mother... I fill up the dishwasher. She then re-arranges everything in it. But it's supposed to be my job, and she gets cross because 'we have to do everything twice'. This practice really is genetic; I know this because my thirteen year old son does it as well. He patiently watches me load up the dishwasher with his hands on his hips. When I am done, he tuts and then re-sorts all the plates into an arrangement which, [unlike mine], does not compromise the Natural Order of The Universe"

Thank-you – and please do come back with us afterwards so that Wendy, Jack and I can demonstrate that the plates really DO fit into the dishwasher!

Sarah and Kerry, are going to talk to us now about Allan as a father.

My Mum once said that Dad had always wanted children and from the moment we were born, he doted on us. Maybe that's the reason we ended up such a big family.

Although keen to instil in us the value of hard work and determination, there was also a fun side too. He was always ready to lead us astray: - teaching us how to jump from higher and higher steps on the staircase; allowing us to operate the gear stick in the car for him: teaching Jack to shout "mint sauce" at sheep in the road. All of us remember Dad leading sing songs in the car; sometimes even the car danced along too.

Dad always supported us in our interests. We all have fond early memories of him reading poems to us at bedtime. We have photos of him building sculptures with Jack, playing drums with Bekah and building a Lego fort with me, although I suspect the Lego fort was his toy as much as mine! As we grew older he actively supported Kerry, Bekah and I with our musical interests; watched Jenny play hockey and was thrilled when Jack started playing cricket. When Jack took 3 wickets in an adult match, Dad had the scorecard framed and hung in his shed.

He carefully stored any certificates we were awarded, whether celebrating academic, musical or sporting achievements and his mantelpiece was often overloaded with our cups, shields and medals.

As time progressed we were also able to share in and appreciate his interests. We visited exhibitions with him. We watched films, enjoyed comedians and went to gigs and festivals with him.

We grew to appreciate his sense of humour and as a family we were often laughing at and with each other. A few weeks ago, when Dad 'happened to mention' he got 100% in his umpiring exam, Bekah asked whether he was being tested on his ability to count 5 pebbles from one hand to the other. For a while as a child I was convinced that the red nosed reindeer was called Eric and Jenny was convinced that the great fire of London was started by a little girl called Jenny who played with matches.

There are some things he might have preferred us to remember less fondly, for example: him falling into the canal after one too many drinks; his foot appearing through the ceiling just above the Christmas tree; and the conifer in the garden which caught fire from his barbeque – he should have listened to his own lesson about matches!

He had a unique disciplinary method for teenagers: a pair of unsightly, patterned baggy trousers that he threatened to wear to parents should behaviour be less than perfect.

Overall however, he wanted us to be happy and we wanted him to be happy. His divorce from my mother affected him badly so we were really pleased when he met Karen and we saw how happy she made him. We loved being bridesmaids and he loved having us as bridesmaids.

Dad was happiest when he had his family around and every year we had a family Christmas at some point in December. We also enjoyed family holidays together. In February, we spent a week together at Centreparks. We were in York at the beginning of March for Great Grandma's 100th birthday and Dad was particularly proud to have his whole 'tribe' present.

Celebrating New Year's Eve 2010 together, dad raised a toast proclaiming it to have been a good year. I personally was momentarily taken back, thinking only of his diagnosis with a carcinoid

tumour in his liver. However, dad then pointed out that 2 wonderful things had happened that year – Kerry had got married and his first grandchild had been born. His children had had a good year and that was all that mattered. He once told Jack he had half a dozen or so very close friends in his life and that Jack was one of them (I'm fairly optimistic Karen and us are included within the others).

Allan was a devoted grandfather and Jenny, the mother of his firstborn grandchild will tell us a little about him in that role.

From the moment we told Dad he was going to be a Granddad he was so pleased and excited, desperate to meet and play with his grandchild. The week before Isabel was born we were at Kerry's wedding, where Dad was dancing with his tie tied around his head, and he completely ignored me, instead pointing to my belly and saying "that's my grandchild in there"

And from the moment she was born he was completely the doting granddad, at every possible moment he would demand it was "his turn on the baby" and whisk her off for Granddad cuddles and stories.

He was also a very frequent babysitter, perfectly happy with bottles, less happy with nappies. I always left him with long lists of instructions and guidance, he'd walk in, glance at them and say "I can manage you know Jenny, I have done this before and I do have a PhD you know". And he did of course know everything, he even bought Isabel a jumper which stated "Daddy knows a lot, but granddad knows everything".

He was so proud of her, two key moments that stick in my head are when she took her first steps in front of him, and the first time she called him Granddad.

And Isabel just adored him, her "Granddad that lives at Uncle Jack's house", they were forever playing games and reading stories together – although he complained a lot of her books were "nonsense", so bought her an entire collection of Dr Seuss to keep at his house: that is, apparently, acceptable nonsense! When she went to stay she didn't want to come home again, and not just because Granddad had bought her the largest bag of sweeties she had ever seen.

Last August when Samuel was born, he was so thrilled that when he visited Sarah in hospital, he threw the flowers he bought onto the floor in his excitement at meeting his first grandson.

And again with Oliver, this time he was delighted that finally, including his son in laws, the boys outnumbered the girls in his family, I think he had been waiting a long time for that to happen.

At Christmas this year, when Samuel was with him for Christmas day and all of us a few days later, he was so happy just surrounded by his children and grandchildren, he was so proud of us all and he would have done anything for any of us. Anything at all.

A few days ago Isabel told me she was sad Granddad had died. I told her it was ok to be sad, we miss him, but it is also ok to be happy, and what we need to do is remember all the fun things we did with granddad. So I asked her "what did you enjoy doing with Granddad" and she replied "feeding the sea lions" in relation to our recent trip to Longleat safari park, where granddad also ran the risk of losing his wiper blades by allowing the monkeys to climb on the car to amuse Samuel. I agreed that was a nice memory and asked "what else did you enjoy doing with Granddad?" the answer "eating", I asked "eating what?" expecting the reply to be along the lines of chocolate or cake – granddad was a great one for sneaking treats – but no, she replies "potatoes, Granddad liked potatoes".

Thank you

Our final speaker is Kerry, who is going to read an excerpt from poem that Allan often read to his children, Errantry by J R R Tolkien.

*There was a merry passenger,
a messenger a mariner:
he built a gilded gondola
to wander in and had in her
a load of yellow oranges
and porridge for his provender;
he perfumed her with marjoram,
and cardamom and lavender.*

*He called the winds of Argosies,
with cargoes in to carry him,
across the rivers seventeen,
that lay between to tarry him.
He landed all in loneliness,
where stonily the pebbles on,
the running river Derrilyn,
goes merrily for ever on.
He journeyed then through meadow-lands,
to shadow-land that dreary lay,
and under hill and over hill,
went roving still a weary way.*

*He passed the achipelagoes,
where yellow grows the marigold,
with countless silver fountains are,
and mountains are of fairy-gold.
He took to war and foraying,
a harrying beyond the sea,
and roaming over Belmary,
and Thellamie and Fantasie.*

*He battled with the Dumbledors,
the Hummerhorns, and Honeybees,
and won the Golden Honeycomb,
and running home on sunny seas,
in ship of leaves and gossamer,
with blossom for a canopy,
he sat and sang, and furbished up,
and burnished up his panoply.*

*He tarried for a little while,
in little isles that lonely lay,
and found their naught but blowing grass.
And so at last, the only way he took, and turned,*

*and coming home with honeycomb,
to memory his message came,
and errand too!
In derring-do and glamoury,
he had forgot them,
journeying and tourneying, a wanderer.*

*So now he must depart again,
and start again bis gondola,
for ever still a messenger a passenger, a tarrier,
a roving as a feather does,
a weather-driven mariner.*

J R R Tolkien

Thank you all for sharing your memories.

Each one of you will have your own special memories of Allan and so we will take a little time now for you to think about him, or to offer private prayer.

While you sit in contemplation we are going to listen to Days, which has been specially recorded for today by Allan's daughters.

Music - Days - by Ray Davies, Sung by Allan's Daughters

Now that we have accompanied Allan to the end of his final journey we have reached the time when we must say farewell to the body that he no longer needs.
You may like to stand while we say goodbye.

He is immune now from the changes and chances that are our mortal lot and so it is with great sorrow, but without fear that we commit the body of Allan Brent Ashworth to be returned to the natural elements from which it was made, knowing that the person who was Allan will live on in the hearts and the memories of those who knew and loved him.

With respect we bid you farewell and with love we leave you in peace.

(as the curtain closes)

His laughter was better than the birds in the morning, his smile
Turned the edge of the wind, his memory
Disarms death and charms the surly grave.
Early he went to bed, too early we
Saw his light put out;
Yet we could not grieve
More than a little while,
For he lives in the earth around us, laughs from the sky.

C. Day Lewis

Now that we have heard from the people Allan loved and we have said farewell to his physical being it only remains for me to remind you that you are all warmly invited to join the family back at the house to share some of your own stories and memories over some refreshments, and perhaps to raise a glass of his own fine whisky to Allan's memory.

Our last piece of music for today is Gaudete sung by Steeleye Span. Thank you all for being here today to remember Allan and may your own onward journey be both peaceful and safe, wherever your path lies.

Exit Music - Gaudete - Steeleye Span