

Brian Joseph Fletcher

14th August 1949 - 1st November 2017

Brian was born in 1949 in Perivale in west London and brought up in Harrow - that is until his father's job at Kodak got moved to Stevenage and the family moved to Hitchin. He was always sporty as a kid - he played football as a young man and was a life-time supporter of Chelsea.

He had just the one brother Steve. He tells the story of the time he and Brian took a trip to London - Brian was 13 and Steve was just 8 - and they went on the Green Line bus to visit London Zoo. They hadn't been at the zoo long when they got caught in a blizzard and got soaked wet through. So freezing cold, they decided to cut the visit short and got back on the Green Line Bus where they promptly removed their socks and shoes and dried their socks on the bus heaters on the journey home.

Brian met Barbara when they were both working at Jansel House. He was working with computers and Barbara was a punch card operator. Their first date came about because he had a spare ticket for the Harlem Globe Trotters as Steve was ill and was not able to go, so Barbara volunteered to go with him. Anyway that started it all. They married 47 years ago when he was still only 21.

Although he did not have religious beliefs they married in church and, as Barbara says, he took his vows very seriously. It was a marriage that was built to last: he recently celebrated their anniversary with this note – "Roses are red, violets are blue, 47 years and I still love you" – albeit written on the back of Barbara's anniversary greeting. He was not exactly one for over the top romantic gestures. For Brian buying flowers was a waste of money. He was always appreciative but not romantic. Having said that they shared a love of good food, eating out at all different types of restaurants, and from their 10th wedding anniversary onwards they would celebrate with a visit to what became their favourite gastro bed and breakfast, The Barn Owls in Pulborough.

Anyway let us return to earlier times. Once Brian and Barbara were married and living in Stevenage his parents bought a shop in Clifton. This was a VG shop (i.e. Village Grocers) and a post office. Both Brian and Steve worked there full time until the shop was sold. After this he became a taxi – driver, which he did for 35 years until he retired seventeen months ago.

Brian was a great father for their three children, Michael, Graham, and Joanne. He was firm, but they describe him as being like an armadillo – a hard shell on the outside and soft on the inside. He was huge fun and life could be a riot. On Sunday afternoons they would play “bundles” – he would be on the floor and everyone would bundle on top of him. He would warn that it would end in tears – as it always did when the ticking became too much for Joanne to bear.

Brian had a great sense of humour – often at Barbara’s expense. One time he came in from working on the taxis with blood down his shirt and he claimed that a fare had punched him on the nose and stolen his money bag from the cab. He soon confessed it was just a nose bleed, once Barbara had threatened to call the police.

He could find humour in anything. When he took Michael to A and E because he had hurt his hand – he asked if he would be able to play the piano. When he was assured that he would, Brian declared it a miracle as he could not play before. When someone phoned he might answer the phone saying it was the Chinese laundry. Or he might tell a cold-calling double glazing salesman that they were about to be evicted.

He was always doing things for his children - whether it was taking Michael to athletics, or Graham to whatever his latest enthusiasm was, or Joanne to horse riding, he was there. Even though he suffered from hay fever he always walked Joanne out at a gymkhana - that is until her horse trod on his toe. He would also take his sons to the snooker hall where they would play together.

If it was possible, he was even less strict and just as much fun with his grandchildren - Ryan and Adam and Lauren and Ellie. He and Barbara would often have the children to stay at the weekend. He tried his best to pass on his love of Chelsea – there was the time when Ryan was a baby and wouldn’t go to sleep. Barbara found Brian upstairs rocking him in his arms going, “Chelsea 5, Manchester United, 1, Chelsea 3, Liverpool nil.....” It must have worked as Ryan wrote to the club saying that Brian had died and he received a flag and this letter from them:

It is with great sadness that we have been informed that Brian has passed away. We know he will be dearly missed by his family and friends. Our thoughts are with you at this difficult time, and on behalf of everyone at Chelsea Football Club I would like to offer our sincere condolences.

And this letter was signed by Gary Cahill the first team captain. You can be sure Brian would have loved this tribute and have been touched that his grandson had thought of this.

Back to happy memories of him as a grandfather. There was the time that he tied a string to the bushes at the bottom of the garden and told the boys that there was a tiger there – and sent them up to look. He frightened the life out of them when they went up the garden and he pulled the string making the bushes move.

Having said what huge fun he was, he could also be very quiet. He wasn't a man for chatting. He was very clever and enjoyed doing crosswords and quizzes – especially the quizzes on the machines at the snooker hall. He was very good at maths but he wouldn't do his children's maths homework. He could at times seem unsympathetic, like the time that Joanne fell into the nettles and he just told her to get the calamine. But he could also be a great listener: as Lisa his niece says - if you had a problem he would listen carefully with great empathy, and his few words could be just the right ones.

So, brought up in a large wider family (his dad had been one of six) - he was a great family man – and he loved all the family occasions where everyone would get together – especially Christmas. They would play cards round the table – sometimes the pool- table sitting in the middle of the living room - and where they had eaten their Xmas lunch. Or they would play the limerick game - though Joanne says that her dad would often end it when he started it off with the man from Nantucket!

It is so sad that he died so suddenly, when he could have had so much longer to enjoy his retirement. He had often spoken about his desire for all the family to go on holiday together, the whole bunch of them, him and Barbara, their three kids, four grandkids, their niece Lisa and her family. It is hard to find consolation – other than to know that he will never be forgotten, that he will live in your memories and that his love and influence will be with you for ever.