

Bryan William Ship

23rd November 1937 – 5th January 2019



The Tribute

Bryan had an amazing life and a great sense of humour. He wrote a poem which sums this up very well. I'll read this now and as its very short and concise I'll then follow it with more detail.

Bryan wrote,

This Is My Life (Read appendix – Bryan's poem here)

You can hear Bryan's sense of humour there and you can remember his jet-black hair with only a touch of grey that he likens to a badger.

Bryan was born in Fulham on 23rd November 1937 to Charles and Elvis. They met when she came up to London from Wales as a lady's maid. He was the porter who opened the taxi door when she was sent ahead to get the apartment ready for the family, cat in tow! Bryan was the third of four siblings: Catherine, John, and Sarah and John's mum Jacqueline, to whom he was close in age. His surviving sister Cath is 89 and lives in Nottingham. Unfortunately, it is too far away for her to be with us today.

It wasn't an easy life for the children as their parents separated when they were young but it certainly made them resourceful. They turned their hands to all sorts to make a bit of extra money delivering newspapers or groceries. And sometimes rubbed up against the rich and famous while offering to guard their cars at, for example, the Queen's Club Tennis Court.

Bryan was a bright boy gaining a place at the grammar school, but was too lively to be contained there for long and often played truant. His keen intelligence was shown in his lifelong love of learning and interest in the world around him. As you know he watched wildlife documentaries and completed crosswords and Sudoku puzzles when he was too housebound to lead the adventurous life anymore.

But what an adventurous life he'd had. This started in the navy which Bryan joined when he was nearly 16 in October 1953. For the next 10 years this took him all over the world with postings in the UK from Scotland, Ireland, Suffolk and Chatham to the Mediterranean - Malta, Suez and Cyprus. He worked on all kinds of ships. The first was an aircraft carrier HMS Centaur, followed by a frigate, a minesweeper and a destroyer. In 1960 as part of the Mediterranean fleet on HMS Phoenicia

they provided relief for pretty much everything – cruisers, tugs and fishing vessels.

Bryan worked in communications and certainly knew more about Morse Code than they did in the movies. Pat remembers him paying close attention, only to realise it wasn't at all accurate!

Bryan gained his pilot's license and following the navy he emigrated to Rhodesia. There he worked as a trainer to new pilots and in air traffic control. Later, in the 70's, he was able to fly his mother over Victoria Falls and the game parks of Zambia. This must have been an amazing and proud achievement.

Bryan married Tina in Malta in 1960 and had two children Bryan Junior and Ginny in quick succession. Sarah remembers her "glamorous uncle" and meeting her cousins often when they were in the UK at boarding school. Although they were later to separate Bryan and Tina remained close. Later the geographical distance made this harder but Bryan had news of Ginny's children: Aden and Hannah and Bryan Junior's: Daryn and Micayla. Not only did he have those four grandchildren he also had two great grandchildren, Aden's Riley and Harper.

Ginny has sent a letter which she would like read today and this gives a wonderful idea about Bryan's family life;

To my dearest Dad,

I am so sorry that we can't be there on this day and can't personally read this letter out to you.

However, I am grateful that you are surrounded by people who loved and cared for you and my feelings will be told.

When I think of you Dad my thoughts and memories are only happy ones 😊

You had the best sense of humour of anyone I know.

You were always happy and cheery and never got cross.

You loved a good party!!!! The most sociable, and the life and soul of every gathering. I remember how you used to love those crazy fancy dress parties.

Your outlook on life was positive and you used to say to me:

“always look on the bright side of life”

My fondest memories are the great adventures you gave us. There are so many, and I can go on and on, but these are the ones that really stick out in my mind:

Flying us to all the various bush lodges around the country.

Fishing and having picnics on the river banks amongst the Crocs and Hippos. (That was pretty scary)

Having our meals on the deck at Kasaba Bay with the Elephants meandering around us.

Wading into the middle of the lake to rescue my rag doll when the Fish Eagle swooped it out of my arms.

Fetching me from Mazabuka because I was home sick and flying back, we chased the goats on the ground with the shadow of your plane.

Our car trip around Europe when we travelled right into the toe of Italy, when we couldn't find a room at the inn we just slept in the car in the Italian countryside.

So many happy memories and adventures.

I will miss you so much my Dad, but I know that you are now resting and at peace and I will

“Always Look on your Bright Side of Life”

Lots and lots of love and a Very BIG BIG HUG

Love Ginny xxxxx

And she also says:

Thank you to Pat, Sarah and all his family and friends that loved and supported him xxxxx

The terrible recent news from Zimbabwe explains why there has been a media shutdown and Bryan junior can't communicate with us. However, his mother Tina says:

Please record our condolences from us all in Africa and our regret at not being with you. We send much appreciation for all of Pat's help.

One of the naval postings involved nuclear testing on Christmas Island

and Bryan always believed this had a damaging effect on his health. He campaigned for compensation when it was apparent that a number of his colleagues were similarly compromised.

Due to a lack of adequate health care in what was now Zimbabwe, Bryan returned to the UK in 2003. Initially quite ill he lived with his sister Jacqueline here in Eastbourne. With her care, “fattening him up” and the support of the NHS he improved markedly.

This led to another lease of life for Bryan and a very happy period in Eastbourne. He became friendly with Pat and what started out as she says with “trips down memory lane” (for him), to Chatham and Wales, developed into a real partnership and they became soulmates. With improved health Bryan was able to plan exciting trips once more and took Pat places she’d never dreamed she’d go - both North and South Cyprus and Egypt for example. They also had many trips here, enjoying Pat’s caravans in Golden Cross and Pevensey. Bryan loved to barbecue, perhaps it reminded him of his African days.

His abiding love of the sea was often a feature of these trips and they visited many a harbour. Ramsgate was a particular favourite and was easy to navigate with the mobile scooter.

Airborne was an annual delight and the very best time was when they went to the Cumberland Hotel and had an excellent view!

Even when Bryan’s mobility became limited his curiosity did not. He was interested in gadgets, helping folks out with their ‘techy’ problems. I visited his home and the smoker, and egg boiler were pointed out. More successful were the slow cooker (best for curry) and bread maker – though who would’ve thought banana bread would be the staple!

Pat says how particular Bryan was and what a perfectionist – he did jigsaws and pasted them up immaculately. Rice had to be the best Basmati and if not steamed just so, would be thrown away.

The original British Navy ‘Pusser’s Rum’ was his favourite and Pat made the annual trip to Harvey’s Brewery in Lewes to get this Christmas Present. What a special treat it was – ‘Gunpowder proof’ at 54%!

In recent years Pat’s loving care of Bryan improved the quality of his life immeasurably. When he no longer drove she became his ‘chaufferress’,

even at the very end. For this Sarah is grateful. And the African branch of the family also express their thanks and appreciation.

Kathleen, Pat's daughter remembers Bryan as always "smoothing over the niggles" and encouraging everyone to make peace and forget their troubles.

Bryan's nephew John would like to share his memories of his uncle and read the poem "Crossing the Bar" by Alfred Lord Tennyson.

John:

Good bye Bryan. Rest in Peace. You were always my favourite uncle, even though I hardly saw you when I was young; the loveable rogue with a glamorous job. I wanted to be a pilot too when I was growing up. I had to make do with sitting as close to the pilots in business class whenever possible! I have you to blame in part for loving to order room service in hotels, as you let me order a bacon sandwich at Heathrow Airport once. One Christmas on my birthday, when I was about 8, you turned up needing a bed – made my birthday that year.

As you moved to Africa we very rarely saw you. I was only too glad to fly you 'home' in 2003 when you were very ill and with my Mum 'fattening' you up you did make a major recovery back here in Blighty with proper care and medication. I know Mum was made up to have her brother back to spend time with. You were pleased to see my kids grow up and proud James carried on the football skills playing for Exeter City Academy - you once had trials at your beloved Fulham. We won't mention the 1975 FA Cup Final where my team West Ham beat Fulham 2 nil– although you did have the best footballer ever in Bobby Moore playing for you that day!

I am so pleased you met Pat and it was fantastic that you were able to travel again - something I know you loved – was always in you from a young age joining the Royal Navy. You went back to some of your old haunts and Ports which must have been really special. One Christmas you stayed with us all at my farm in Devon and I set you and Dad the task of putting up 100 lights in the garden. A job you did but knackered you both out, but I think a few bottles of wine and beer helped the day proceed. You and dad were terrible when together and stories of you two drinking make my liver shudder.

Thank you for my metal detector, hopefully we will find treasure one day and thanks for trying to teach me to do cryptic crosswords and sharing your solution driven attitude. I will try and take that on as I grow old too. We all know you leave Pat behind heartbroken but we will look after her best we can. I know she treasures the memories you made together.

Rest easy now and have the odd beer, eating fish and chips, watching sport & doing your crosswords. HAPPY DAYS... Cheers Bryan (I will have tot of rum with you). Love Johnny xx

“Crossing the Bar’ by Alfred Lord Tennyson.

*Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,*

*But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.*

*Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;*

*For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.*