

A Tribute to David Richards
28th December 1948 – 9th January 2017

At the heart of this ceremony is David's life; a life well lived. I wasn't privileged to meet David, but Judith has told me much about him. Together with some tributes from David's close friends and colleagues, I hope this ceremony can help you to focus on your own love for David and appreciate how much he was loved by others.

David was born in Oldham, just after Christmas in 1948, to Hilda and David Richards. He was a much-loved, late addition to the family, joining his much older sisters, Emily and Evelyn, who spoiled him rotten – to Evelyn he was always "my David".

David attended Leicester College of Art before going on to Coventry College of Art for his National Diploma in Fine Art and it was at art school that he made his first film. He also made many loyal friendships there that lasted fifty years. The Art school friends met for dinner two or three times a year, and during his illness these friends; Neil, Joan, Simon and Andrew, provided much appreciated support for David and Judith. David's interest in art remained a life-long passion; visiting exhibitions, drawing and painting and expressed in his film-making. He and Judith filled their home with many works of art.

David began his career in TV as one of only four trainees taken on by Granada Television in Manchester that year.

During this time, he married his first wife, Susan, and in 1978 they had a son, Dan. Their daughter Amy was born two years later. The family moved to London and David continued his career in television, working as a freelance director in current affairs and documentaries.

In 1986 David met Judith when they were both working on a documentary for Central Television's *Central Weekend*. Judith was a researcher and admired David's work, drawn to his integrity and sharp analysis.

They soon found that they were both strongly attracted to each other. At first they both ran away from it, feeling it unprofessional and inappropriate. Working closely together, it proved impossible to ignore and eventually they both had to admit that they were falling in love and David had to take the difficult and painful decision to end his marriage in order to be with Judith. And from then on not a single day went by without them saying I love you to each other.

In the late 80s David made the move into directing drama and went on to direct across the whole field of drama from soaps such as *Coronation Street*, through continuing dramas such as *The Bill* and *Foyle's War*, to TV mini-series, such as *Reckless* and TV movies.

David thrived on the intricacies of directing drama, working with writers on the script, shaping ideas, crafting each shot like a painting, paying attention to every aspect of production, finding perfect locations and collaborating with colleagues; he loved his work.

It was in looking for locations for a BBC drama series in 1994 that David travelled to the Greek island of Skyros, where he and Judith met TV director, George Economou, and his wife, Antigone. They quickly became friends, so much so that David and Judith have holidayed on Skyros many times with them and built a deep and lasting friendship with George and Antigone and a strong connection with the island. Shortly before David died, George wrote to Judith asking her to tell David how much their friendship has meant to him.

“Please tell him one more time that he has been our BEST FRIEND. That says it all and it is true. We also know how much he loved and cared for us, he was always so open and generous in expressing his feelings. David is unique and irreplaceable in our minds and hearts. He is a hero. Antigone says that of course Skyros will never be the same, his love for the place was fully reciprocal.”

His work took him around the world, from making a documentary in China, to filming in South Africa for *The Runaway* and for *Wild At Heart*, where David and Stephen Tompkinson bonded over their love of cricket; also filming in Italy, France and Germany and travelling to California to work with the musicians who scored his dramas, in particular Hal Lindes who wrote to Judith:

“I’m just gutted, I’ve lost my closest friend and my greatest creative collaborator, it’s a double whammy and I’m still struggling with coming to grips with the reality of it. It’s a very sad time and our hearts are broken to have to say goodbye to such a special man. David will always have a permanent place in my heart and will forever stay with me creatively. He is so loved and will be so missed.”

In 2000 David’s talent was rewarded with a BAFTA nomination for *This Is Personal: The Hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper*, and a Best Director award at the New York Film and TV Festival for the same film. Mark Redhead who produced the programme, wrote to David about it just before he died,

“The drama is one of the highlights of my working life. I think it’s pretty much flawless. You cast it brilliantly and drew great performances from the actors – And not only the principals but also the one scene actors, who to a man and woman were utterly believable and often very moving. I recalled how you hit exactly the right note of unfussy, northern matter-of-factness, which made the show both very powerful, but also respectful of the subject matter. I think the drama did real justice to the story and the real people involved in it and as an early example of the factual drama, it set a standard for the shows that followed it that has only rarely been matched.”

David also nurtured talent; giving work to colleagues he felt needed a break who flourished under his direction. After his death, Catherine Creed who was his editor for 15 years wrote to Judith,

“My heart is so heavy today at this news. David was such a true and loyal friend to me over the years. Through his kindness and generosity he nurtured me and it is he I have to thank for what I have today. I will miss him so very much I cannot even bear to think about it. I know how lucky I have been to have had such a wonderful friend and collaborator – for that I am truly grateful.”

And of course, throughout this time, his children grew up. It goes without saying that he loved them dearly. He nurtured and supported them, was always there to listen and when needed to advise and gently guide them in their life journeys and was immensely proud of the adults they grew into.

David's life with Judith flourished, and in 2004, after proposing every year for about 10 years, Judith finally said yes and they were married on a gloriously happy day – their happiness and love for each other apparent to all the friends and family that gathered to celebrate with them.

John Dunworth, one of David's close friends and colleagues, has written a personal tribute to David that he would like to read.

Tribute from John Dunworth

Sent from California ... January 2017

Hello you two,

I have arrived in Palm Springs and the weather is glorious and just wanted to share some of it with you. I know you would love it; the sun of course, but the mountains and the desert. The light constantly changes and the mountains change with it

Capturing shadows and light ... isn't that what art is all about?

And here it is writ large on a massive physical scale...

Drove to the Joshua Tree National Park yesterday afternoon to watch the sun set; a beautiful eerie vast empty space, with contorted trees and strange rock formations casting weird, moody shadows ... big open skies ... turning into a star filled canopy...

One of those special moments that take your breath away.

We ate at a small place called the 29 Palms Inn; a glass of Merlot and fresh wholesome food...

And, it was there we raised a glass to you both and especially of you David given that you are locked into your trajectory out of here, I wanted to offer you a couple of thoughts;

I have immensely enjoyed our friendship; your intellect and passion as well as your kindness. In all of these years of knowing you, never once have I seen you lose interest in the world or shown the slightest bit of cynicism about life or people. You were always considered in your responses and looking for what's good ... that's not to say without conviction or a strong point of view ... but always thoughtful and delivered with often forensic precision.

And God you've made me laugh...

In recent conversations I was very moved and impressed by stories you told me recently about meeting Jude and having a life with her.

When such a huge love comes your way it might have been easier to retreat back to a safer, less challenging life but you explained that once you fell in love with Jude,

being without her would have meant living a half-life, and you would always have been haunted by what might have been. So you had to be true to your heart and answer that particular call.

And although to do so was very painful and incredibly difficult, you persevered and over the years you built your love affair into something that was very present and integral to your everyday life and have shared it with all of us. And in doing so, made your love for each other a living breathing thing and gathered around you a wonderful collection of family and friends to celebrate it.

And for those of us who became part of your network we all know that to love one of you is to love the other, there is no separation ...

David and Jude ... Jude and David

There was also another story you told about how you and Jude would have parties for just the two of you ... the house on your own ... you said that despite your northern male reticence to dance in any shape or form ... Jude had encouraged you to shake off your inhibitions and the two of you would spend the evening grooving to dance music ... And that you loved it ... albeit making sure that the curtains were drawn.

It was such a touching and moving (and funny) account of a window of your life with Jude ... and so impressed that through Jude you had learned to let go of your inhibition and to dance.

You also said that the silver lining over these past few months (and trust you to find one!) was the joy of seeing your children and grandchildren all together and united in their love of you, Jude and each other...

Your DNA will live on in these generations and I'm convinced that so much of you will be left behind that will reflect not just your biology... but your life, your beliefs and your passions.

You had also expressed how very painful it was for you to leave Jude behind, but be assured she is part of all of our lives and we will support her and care for her on your behalf.

David my dear friend I can only say that you were one hell of a class act and I hope you found some peace in those final days...

With much love and respect,

John

The Tribute continues...

Sadly, late in December 2014, David was diagnosed with advanced bladder cancer, too advanced for surgery. Shortly after his diagnosis, David's first grandchild, Celestine, was born to Amy and Vincent and David said it was as if light had come into his life.

After treatment, David's health remained pretty good for 18 months and he realised he was not ready to give up work just yet. So in the spring of 2016 he embarked on his final project, a two-part episode of *Silent Witness* for the BBC, working with past colleagues, including cinematographer Annemarie Lean-Vercoe.

Annemarie wrote to Judith:

"Collaborating with David has been some of the happiest times in my career, I truly appreciate the opportunities he gave me, and so enjoyed it. He was very inspiring, and someone I have learned so much from since I have known him, chatting about all areas of work, life and art, and having fun in the process.

*I am so honoured that I did get the chance to work with him. I will watch our episodes of *Silent Witness* with sadness that I only knew him for three years, but proud that I did so."*

Shortly after wrapping *Silent Witness*, David was immensely proud to walk Amy down the aisle and to celebrate her marriage to Vincent in May last year.

Soon after this happy occasion his health began to deteriorate, but once again life was made sweet with the arrival of his second granddaughter, baby Clementine, later in the year.

David's health continued to decline and then in November came the news that the cancer had spread and his kidney function was so bad that he would require dialysis.

Dan is a head chef and was working over Christmas, so the family came together in mid-December, and Dan and his wife Esther, Amy, Vincent and their daughters were at home to celebrate Christmas early with David and Judith.

As Christmas approached, David was taken into hospital again. He was obviously very ill and his condition was worsening and David took the brave decision not to stay in hospital to have any further medical interventions. So on the 3rd January, Judith brought David home from hospital to be with the family.

In the early afternoon of the 9th January, everyone had gone out and the house was still and quiet when David died in Judith's arms. They were able to say I love you to each other one last time before he died. It had been a perfect ending to a life well lived.

Judith said:

“David was simply the best person I have ever met. I loved him entirely and completely for all that he was – for his integrity, his honesty, his intellect and his wit, his generosity and kindness and for his enormous capacity to love. I will be forever grateful that I had 30 of the best years imaginable being loved by him.”

John Sharian is a big built American actor and dear friend of Judith and David, who first worked with David in the early 1990s on Crocodile Shoes and then later in Foyle’s War. Sadly, he is unable to be here today, but has sent this personal tribute to his friend, David.

Tribute from John Sharian
Read by Elizabeth Donnelly, Humanist Celebrant

“Hi David:

I’ve been re-reading James Salter since you went away and came across this:

‘I don’t hold myself dictated to by what everyone is saying, by the tabloids or popular opinion. I don’t like bourgeois values. I say you find your own way to live.’

That’s David speaking I thought – simple, direct, and principled. I once told you that you were like granite – like the lines in your face, your values and your goodness were carved into your soul. You laughed your great laugh, and said you didn’t know about that.

Since you went away, I’ve been looking at men’s shoes. *‘John, you can tell a man’s character by his shoes.’* I looked down at my dilapidated, dirty trainers and asked *‘Well what do these say about me then?’* You looked down, took a drag on your Marlboro Red and said with a smile, *‘You’re the exception to the rule, John.’*

I can see your shoes as they cross your kitchen floor. You’re home from a long day filming. You say to Jude, *‘Hello, sweetie.’* And you hold her and kiss her for a long time because you love her, God how you love that woman, and she you.

Later over a brandy, you relate the story of how a well-known actor stepped over the line by speaking down to a member of your crew. You ask the actor to come around the back of the set and let him know that if he ever does that again, you’ll take his fookin’ head off of his body. The actor never does that again and will go on to ask for you on future projects. Your loyalty to your crew, the respect they have for you and the straightforward no-nonsense way you go about your business, gives your film sets a sense of calm – *‘the gaffer knows where we are going, so there’s no need to worry’*.

After that project is finished you move on to the new film straight away without taking a break. *‘It’s not great, John, but I can make something of it, and I want the dough – want to help out the kids.’* Because you love your kids – God how you love your kids – and they you.

You get me on the project to play a sadistic WWII American Sergeant, (nobody said you were immune to type-casting). In a scene where I am terrorizing a prisoner in a cell, you are sitting in the corner with headphones on and a hand-held monitor in your lap, rocking back and forth willing on the rhythm and the violence of the scene but with a look of sadness in your eyes – that was you as director, plugged in to the scene intellectually, but feeling everything along the way.

A few weeks into it you have re-written the entire script (with no final credit for yourself) and told the producers to grow up and stop acting like managers of a supermarket chain. Like the actor, they will grow to respect you, stay out of your way and hire you on any project they are working on. We're riding back in the car and after a long period of silence you turn to me, *'At the end of the day, John, is this lark really a fit profession for a grown man? I'm just asking.'*

See, it all keeps coming back to your character, to the pure-line beauty of who you are – you found your way to live, and to die, and nobody was going to tell you how to do either. What an inspiration you are.

Miss you, Captain.

Love,
John”