

The Funeral of

Derek Royston Ede

15th August 1927 – 6th April 2019

Cemetery Chapel, Tunbridge Wells
23rd April 2019, 1pm

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The Tribute

The story I'm going to tell is based on the memories of all three of Derek's children.

Derek was born in 1927, the younger son of Grace and Alfred Ede. His elder brother Frances was a quiet, neat and gentle boy, so the arrival of Derek, who was best described as rambunctious, tested Grace to her limits.

He was twelve when the war broke out. Like much of his life, he didn't really discuss these years, but it seems he got into all sorts of scrapes looking for unexploded incendiary devices he and his friends could cannibalise whilst watching the dog fights above. They lived in Welling, in Kent, so there was lots going on in the sky. He became a messenger for the air raid wardens and was allocated his own tin hat and gas mask. He seems to have enjoyed this time – the men were away, so as a teenage boy he found himself with more responsibility than he would normally have had, and he loved it.

He went to Dartford Grammar School, but by 1944 he wanted even more responsibility. He tried to get into the army, and passed officer selection, but then they realised he was under-age. He tried again, and this time got into the Marchant Navy, who apparently weren't so fussy. One of the ships he was on was hit during that last year of the war, but fortunately not sunk.

After the war, Derek worked at Siemens and then moved to Shell to work in the Shell Tankers division. He travelled all over the world as a radio superintendent. He worked on many different ships and met many different people. As usual, he rarely talked about his experiences, which are thought to have involved a lot of time in the Far East, including having tea with Geishas. One story he did tell was about being held at gunpoint on the ship when they were docked in Basra. He did not seem particularly phased by this experience, commenting that it was bandits who "just wanted money".

He said he would leave the family a message in morse code, but they haven't found it yet.

(note: at the Committal, the family sent Derek a message in Morse Code)

At Shell he was a manager but was not afraid to get his 'hands dirty', he was very well liked by the workers in the company as a result.

Derek and Joan met, as so many did in those days, at a dance, in their case at the Embassy Ballroom in Welling, dancing to Stan Atkin's Broadcasting Band.

They saved up and first bought a bungalow in Bexley Heath, where their eldest son Nevil was born in 1959, and then Paul in 1962. In 1965 the family moved to Fleet so that Derek could commute to the Shell building near Waterloo, and the boys could be enrolled in the new school system. Victoria was born in 1972. They were very happy in Burnside, and lived there for fifty years.

Derek took early retirement from Shell and worked as a magistrates court usher and as a guide at Stratfield Saye House (home of the Duke of Wellington). Later in life he started racquet stringing for local players and clubs. He taught himself to do this and took great pride in his work. It became a profitable little business, and he spent a lot of time in his shed with his various templates. Derek also organised the classic car Sunday during Fleet Carnival for a number of years.

Derek was interested in news, politics and sport, his politics sometimes leading to heated debate across the Sunday lunch table with his sons. As a sports player he was very active in squash and badminton and was still playing squash against young men well into his seventies. As a spectator he was particularly interested in Formula 1. He was also very good at DIY and could often be found working away in his shed at various projects for the house. All of the paving and drive at the house in Burnside was done by him, with Victoria helping him with the grouting.

Nobody would describe Derek as being interested in the arts but apparently at Shell's get-togethers at the Lensbury club he was known as a proficient and energetic dancer!

Although perhaps not naturally gifted with children he was always reliable. He never spent much money on himself and worked hard to provide for his family. Derek was as strong as a bull and capable of fearsome sounding threats to keep two squabbling boys in line, without ever laying hands on them.

He was a hard-working man with an unwavering moral compass. He put his family first in all things, and was loved by them for this. Whilst not able to be demonstrative with his affection, there is no doubt he loved his children very much, and they knew this. He was always loyal to Joan, even entering a care home for a while when she began to suffer from dementia because he did not want to be parted from her.

Victoria will now read us "If" by Rudyard Kipling, which she feels captures Derek's approach to life.

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!*

Thank you, Victoria.

For all of you, this must be a difficult time, coming so soon after Joan's death.

Victoria told me that she thought that Derek had, consciously or unconsciously, hung on to life as long as Joan might need him, and then given himself permission to give up – as an active man, he did not relish old age and infirmity.

We often think of death as a cruel enemy, taking away those we love, but for those who are suffering or who have reached the end of their endurance, it can come as a quiet friend, closing the curtains, blowing out the light, and settling us into a last sleep, free from pain and weariness.

And I hope it was so for Derek.