

Tribute for Archive of
Derek Anthony Pearce
10/05/1946 – 19/07/2018

Written by
Gerald Pearce

Tribute

Since dad's passing everyone has been so kind to me and so generous in their words, everyone from his closest friends to the local newsagent has expressed how friendly, cheerful and kind-hearted Dad was, with a good sense of humour he always had a tale to tell.

This was without doubt the hardest thing I have ever had to write and despite Dad giving me the stories to include, I may have missed something out, but forgive me, as there are some parts of Dad's life that you will know better than me, because for me he was just my dad, a man who loved his job, loved his fishing and bridge, loved my mum and was always there when I needed him. I am beyond proud to call him my dad.

Derek was born in Barry on the 10th May 1946 to Frederick and Betty, joining elder sister Patricia, and with the addition of Stephen in 1953 the Pearce family lived in a happy loving terraced house in Belvadere Crescent.

Always keen to better himself and earn some money. He did many jobs including being a life guard and working at Barry Island where for just £1 a day he would run the big wheel.

In 1961 Derek went to Barry Tech, he was recognised as the Second-best Student in his year, having achieved eighty words a minute short hand and thirty words a minute typing, he was only beaten in his class by a shy young girl from Penarth.

He would often say that the best thing about college was that sat alongside him for three years was his lovely girl Gaynor. "I constantly showed interest in her" he would say "but she showed none at all in me".

When they finished tech they went their separate ways, until one day Derek decided to drive to Penarth and ask Gaynor's mum if he could wait in the house for Gaynor to come home.

After some convincing Gaynor agreed to go on their first date on 7th November 1966 to the Capitol cinema to see The Blue Max, and that was the start of a love story that would never diminish, falter or fade over the next 52 years.

Derek would leave college in 1963 an accomplished student, with O Levels in English, accounts, statistics, commerce, short hand and typing. Plus, a Diploma in commercial studies, and A levels in statistics and accountancy.

Derek's first full time employment was to work for Semtex. His job was as an estimating clerk for the schools. He would receive line drawings and would have to convert them into inches and then order the correct number of tiles. Derek was there six months and to his own admission was not very good and had a tendency to over order, sometimes by 10 to 1.

He recounted one time when the school needed 80,000 tiles but Derek got confused and ordered 800,000. This meant that they would have to find another school that would have some use for 720,000 green floral tiles. When asked if they sacked him, "No" he replied "but they did advise that I might want to find work elsewhere"

He then worked for Arthur Douglas. Selling cadimatics. Derek's role was as Accounts Manager and stayed there for two years but not particularly enjoying the job he looked elsewhere for a change.

Surprising his family, Derek then applied to join the police and on the 22nd September 1967 was accepted and got sworn in. His first position was as a PC in Clifton Street where his first duty was to blacken the grate in the police station ready for the morning fire.

During this time Derek and Gaynor were married on the 4th March 1968, and after spending four years in rented accommodation and later in a police house, Derek and Gaynor would purchase their one and only home in Bassaleg.

Gerald was born in 1973 and with addition of their first family pet Smokey the family was complete. Even though money at times was tight, Derek still provided very well for Gaynor and Gerald. Always going on summer holidays and day trips.

Derek thoroughly enjoyed his time in the Police Force and made many lifelong friends. He would recount his stories of policing with a glint in his eye.

One of Derek's favourite stories was this....

We used to get free curry in city road, we would take our own saucepans hidden under our cape. On one occasion there had been a report of a burglary and a car came screaming down the road, so without thinking I held my hand up to do a stop sign.

Luckily we were on the way in to the curry house and not on the way out, otherwise I would have been covered. The car didn't stop so I dived out of the way and it crashed in the next street, so we headed off to find the villain.

We couldn't find him, but we did find the car and we took from the car a three foot sword, which we placed carefully in the back of the police car. And then within minutes we found the villain, and we also put him in the back of the police car. So now he is in the back of the police car with the sword and won't let us back in to the car.

After being promoted in 1975, one of Derek's postings was in 1976 as the uniform sergeant in charge of covering the queen concert in Ninian Park. In Derek's words he would retell the tale.

“I thought it would be an easy gig. But it rained all day, I was in charge of eight PCs moaning about when can they get food or when can they get relieved. Our main job was to throw drunks out of the fish n chip marquee, I had personally chucked out eight of them and was right fed up with the night.

I was just about to chuck the ninth drunk out when I spotted a special constable just coming into my view, I said to him “good to see you mate if you’ve got time can you go and throw the drunk out of the marquee.”

He said “I can’t do that, getting agitated”

I said “I want you to throw the drunk out of the marquee,”

“No” he says “I can’t do that,”

I said “It’s your job go and do it, if you can’t do that I said your no use to me so bugger off up to queen street’

So he left and I didn’t see him for hours. At the end of the night I was telling a PC how annoyed I was with the special constable. Just then the special walked past us and the PC falls to the ground laughing, what’s so funny I asked, and he said “He’s not a special constable he’s a member of St. John’s ambulance”

Derek’s favourite time as a policeman was in the CID which was then followed by being promoted to Inspector in 1982, he would then go on to be stationed in Pontypridd, Cardiff Central Prosecution and Bridgend.

He also did a spell as acting chief inspector to the Chief Superintendent of C Division in Cardiff Centre. His final post was as Inspector in Complaints and Discipline. Due to a double aneurism in his eye causing a torn retina, Derek retired in 1995 at the young age of 49.

Derek started fishing in 1975, and joined the South Wales Division in 1982, and he would go on to run the force200 club for 25 years. He later went on to form

and run the Cardiff Fly Fishing section and would continue to be the leading light in both sections until ill health caused him to step down.

He would love the days out fishing, the fun he would have on the jollies, but also fiercely competitive he was very proud of being one of a team of four officers to win the police nationals in 2009. He continued to enjoy fishing right up to the Autumn of 2017.

Retired life was going pretty well for Derek, Gaynor and their two cats (Tommy & Lucy), they enjoyed going on holidays, tending to the garden and going for drives in his jag, until cancer hit again and out of the blue Gaynor developed an aggressive form of ovarian cancer, a courageous and private battle that would last two years ensued that ultimately ended in heartbreak when Gaynor passed away on 23rd January 2011.

At this point Derek's world collapsed, devastated by the loss, it was hard to see a way through. Gaynor was Derek's life, the reason why he got up in the morning, and since retiring they had spent almost every hour of every day together. He was devoted, there was never going to be anyone else, life was now about coping.

But over time with help of old friends and new Derek rebuilt his life. He continued to enjoy his time spent fishing, as well as short breaks and meals out with friends, he continued to indulge his passion for cars by purchasing a new and always shiny jaguar XF.

Always an avid card player, Bridge provided Derek with the opportunity to fill his days, meet some new friends and challenge himself to get better and better. He thoroughly enjoyed playing bridge in both Cardiff, Newport and on weekends away. Always one to help others he took great pride in being asked for his advice from fellow players.

A private and ferociously proud man he didn't let on from 2014 that he was again battling cancer and things were at least manageable until December 2017, and then the cancer took hold and then next seven months was marred by a time limiting prognosis, severe kidney infections, two bouts of kidney failure, four heart attacks, pneumonia, weight loss, incalculable pain in the bones and fatigue.

For a man who was always immaculately turned out, so uncomfortable with his physical state Derek choose to shelter from the world, important to him that very few friends would see the full extent of the cancer.

From December onwards Derek's life how he liked to live it, had ended, and as such Gerald would like me to read his closing tribute.

Words cannot express how awful this time was for Dad. For me seeing someone you love slowly fade away, be in constant pain and be blighted by issue after issue was horrendous.

However I would not delete this time spent, despite Dad wishing that he had died in December, and repeating that life wasn't worth living, it wasn't all bad. The time we spent together at home and in hospital was precious and there were still many laughs to be had.

Throughout the next ten weeks, so desperate was Dad never to return back to hospital a new bedroom was created downstairs and in the weekdays he was looked after by Pam and at the weekend by myself.

Dad was very grateful to Pam for her care and company, it meant he could spend his last few weeks at home and not in a hospital bed. The days and weeks went by and even though he was a shadow of his former self at times he appeared to be getting better.

However, on Monday 16th July we were told there was no more treatment available, and that his time was up, admission to St David's was both inevitable and welcomed. With a bag packed and a deep breath Dad, Pam and I took his last trip to St David's on Wednesday afternoon, when not long after arriving the relief was so great that Dad shouted with honest passion "Hoorah I've arrived I've arrived"

So on Thursday 19th July at 18:40 the mind finally caught up with the body, not just accepting the inevitable but embracing it, Dad took the opportunity to peacefully slip away when his brother Steven joined us at the hospice.

Dad always said, everyone dies. Rest in peace Dad, knowing that you had a full and happy life, much loved, you are forever in our hearts and even though I can never share another thought or ask your advice, I take comfort that wherever you are, you have now found mum.