

**Archive Tribute of**

**Eric John Farmer**

**08/08/1930 – 27/11/2018**

**Written by**

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## Tribute

Eric was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1930, the eldest son of George and Iris and the elder brother of Kenneth and George, who was always called Georgie to avoid confusion with his dad. His father was a bus driver and his mother sang and used to perform at clubs around Barry with her sister, who played the piano.

The family lived in Roberts St when Eric was born, but soon after they moved to 21 Richards Street, where he was to live for the rest of childhood and the first years of his married life. He didn't speak much about his childhood to his own children as he and Kath were very much focused on their lives with their family, they always lived in the here and now.

But he told them that his father used to raise greyhounds and race them at Jenner Park, that he helped his father by walking his greyhounds for him every day and that this was his reason for not having dogs when they were children; because someone would have to walk them, and he knew it would end up being him. Coming from a musical family he was taught the piano from an early age by his aunt Ivy and his love of music lasted for the rest of his life. All his children followed him in learning the piano and each received the same encouragement from Eric, if not his equal amounts of his talent. He also told how much he enjoyed the Air Training Corp, going on trips away to Cornwall and other places and it was this that started his interest in flying and his desire to join the RAF. However, he had asthma, which prevented this, but his fascination with anything to do with flying and planes was to last the rest of his life.

He went to Gladstone Road School and when he left started an apprenticeship, which included studying at Barry Technical College, now the Cherry Orchard where you will be having a drink in his memory later.

About a year after he left school, when he was sixteen, he met the love of his life Kathleen. They met at a party and were to court each other for next six years. Kath lived in Foster Street in Cadoxton and she often teased him years later that he would often let her walk home on her own so that he wouldn't get in trouble with his mum for coming in late.

The other thing she never let him forget, was when he returned home from a trip away with the ATC and had no present to give her. His excuse was that he had given her present to a girl he had met in Cornwall. She may have forgiven him for this, as they were married on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1952, but she certainly didn't forget it, as she was still reminding him and everyone else of it over sixty years later.

Their first home as a married couple was with Eric's parents in Richard Street and it was here that their family began to grow. They lived there when Karen was born but moved to Dyfan Road about the time of Ian's birth in 1958 and were to live there for the rest of their lives. Andy came along in 1961, Lynda in 1964 and Maria completed their family in 1968. His family was the most important of the five main elements of Eric's life, the others being friends, music, model making and mowing the lawn.

Kath and Eric were a good team making sure that their children had happy childhoods. Money was tight and so Eric worked hard as a car mechanic and fitter, long hours, sometimes more than one job and sometimes no job, while Kath looked after the house and they both put the children first in all things.

Andy told me that it was only years later that he realised that his father's favourite foods weren't cheese toasted on a plate for his tea and jam sandwiches for his packed lunch, but they were cheap meals, so the money could be spent on the children's food. Always happy to save money Eric was once seen around in a fetching pair of red satin daps, which he had picked up very cheap and couldn't care less what others thought of him or his bargain.

But the children weren't aware of any struggles their parents had. Their lives were full, and their dad was a huge part of them. He was either in work or he was at home with them, spending hours with them, whether it was teaching them to write nicely, running them around taking them to piano lessons, dance classes or anything else they were up to. He showed them what it was to be a good parent; he was very supportive, encouraged them to believe in themselves and taught them that they could do anything they wanted, if they worked for it. Oh, and he was fun to be with, he got on well with children and was like a second dad to many; his nephews and nieces, the friends of his own children and his surrogate nephews and nieces; the children of his and Kath's many good friends in the area around the Witchell. So, the house was usually full of children.

He and Kath had many good friends, friendships that lasted for decades. This was largely because he and Kath were good, loyal and caring friends who always put others first. They were always happy to help others, Eric helping a lot of people with work on their homes and cutting their lawns. As one friend put it their priorities were "everyone else first and then Kath and Eric."

Outside his family his passions were music, playing the organ, very well, and making working models. He was once asked to start playing the organ professionally in clubs, but refused, because then he would have to play what

other people wanted not the music he loved. He made models for many years and not surprisingly involved his children in it. On one occasion when a Welsh news show was going to film two boats that he had made for Lynda and Maria, he went to school and took them out of class for the day, so they could be involved. It was the only time he ever let them have time off school.

In the early years of this decade Eric's life changed when he lost both his brothers and Kath within three years. He had always had poor health but as he passed through his eighties, things got more difficult. His family became even more the focus of his life as he slowed down, happy to spend time with those he loved and to watch CSI, NCIS, football and snooker on the TV. Visits to and from his children and his beloved grand-children, Callum, Hannah, Tom, Sam and Leighton and his great granddaughter Brianna were the highlights of his life

He was still well enough to get about on his own and look after himself when he accidentally fell at home recently. He was rushed to hospital but sadly died two days later in on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November.

We will soon hear some tributes from Eric's children, but I'd like to finish with the thoughts of some others who knew him. Lynda showed me a book of photos and letters from friends that she put together for Kath and Eric's fiftieth wedding anniversary in 2002. I'd like to read you a few excerpts from the letters.

*Jean wrote "I have lived next door to Kath and Eric for forty-three years and can honestly say we have never had an argument. We have been there for each other through the highs and lows of our lives."*

*“(They) have been especially good to me since Doug died. I would be lost without them and would like to take this opportunity to let them know how much I appreciate all that they have done for me and how much I value their friendship.”*

Julie, Cheryl and Steven said *“They are always pleased to see us, and we can remember as young children, they were always happy and Eric tickling us and making us laugh.....They are always interested in what we are doing and how we are. They always seem to take trouble in their stride and never make a fuss.*

Finally Ray Westacott wrote *“Over the years I got to know Eric and Kath quite well I believe, and I found them to be totally committed with and to their family.*

*“Eric came to work with me in the evenings and weekend and in all the time we worked together he was always up for a laugh and a chat....Eric in my view was one of the most under-estimated craftsmen that I have known.*

*“Eric and Kath have lived by example, unfailing to both family and friends. They have a perception of other people’s needs and have always been there to help without the asking.”*

We are now going to listen to “Everything I Own” by Bread, chosen because it describes how his children feel about Eric;

Music  
‘Everything I Own’ by Bread

David, one of Eric's sons-in-law will not come up and say a few words

### David's Tribute

It was about thirty years ago I first met Eric and Kath, they welcomed me into their house with total acceptance of who I was despite not being from Barry or even Wales, they were never pre-judgemental.

Shortly afterwards the volume knob was cranked up all the way to eleven, this was not an argument or even a heated discussion, it was only Ken arriving for another "set Barry Council right" session. I have since discovered the volume is directly proportional to the number of Farmer men present, but with Eric it was never in anger.

Eric was a man who was kind, gentle and loving, always finding joy in the achievements of his family. He was proud of his children and grandchildren but never in a boastful way. Always encouraging them to do what they wanted to the best of their ability.

It has been my privilege to have known Eric and become part of his family, despite that he recently aged me by sending me a birthday card that was "to my brother-in-law" but all was forgiven as he sent me a few more quid than Lynda got.

There is now a huge void where Eric used to be, we can all help fill that void and perhaps make the world a better place if we all try to be a bit more like Eric.

Hannah, Eric's grand-daughter will now come up and read a poem she has written about her grandfather.

## My Gramps

For all that knew him-be it years, months weeks or days,  
Were drawn in by his grin,  
his hugs, his love,  
his super human ways.

A list of things that made him 'him'  
Is something that I have made:

His cap. His planes. His tickle fights.  
The music that he played.

That comb over.

The push along lawn mower.  
His whistling.

Those flipping taxi chocolate bars.  
The go cart that he made.  
A yellow dingy a makeshift pool  
where me and Leighton played.

I used to empty the handmade chalices  
From the fire place,  
Looking for hidden jewels, comprised of mostly buttons.

Carving my cousins name into the wallpaper in the spare  
bedroom.  
The spelling my downfall.

Never was I in trouble, never did he shout.  
I was the only girl you see  
I thought I ran that house.

Round there every Thursday for sausages and mash.  
Brushing nanas hair  
and a wagon wheel with gramps.

Best till last, I have saved:

The way he worshiped nana.  
Raised five children hand in hand.  
Not that easy I imagine.

Not always what they wanted  
but what they could afford.  
Is a mantra we all know,  
one that we adore.

My gramps was not just a dad, grandfather or friend.  
I truly believe he was the last  
of the gentlemen.  
Nothing was ever too much,  
an inconvenience or displeasure.  
They don't make them like that now.  
He had the full measure.

When I think of him passing,  
I just want to cry,  
the fear is that if a tear does slip  
my eyes will never dry.

I hear his voice from yesterday years  
loud and perfectly clear  
telling me to hold my head up high.

Get out of it. Smile scamp, come on over here.

For he is not sad that he has gone,  
he is on cloud nine.  
Reunited with my nana  
somewhere up in that sky.

Cracked and bruised,  
My heart has broken.  
I feel lost inside.

But Time will pass, pain will ease,  
treasured are our memories  
Don't lock them up, set them free

Come and share yours with me.

We all need this time to grieve.

Not gone forever,  
just for now  
until we meet again, my gramps.  
It is a long good bye.

Sleep well my love,  
my hero.  
my life.

Hannah Loe

## Lyn's Eulogy

I'm not sure that I can follow Hannah, but I will give it a try.

Firstly, thanks for showing your love and respect for our Dad. Seeing you all here reminds us of the wider circle that had a place in their heart for him. Eric, Grampy, Uncle, Neighbour, and Friend to many – Big Ek to the chosen few.

We will all remember him in different ways and MY DAD was this:

I was his worm and he was my rock:

The man who was scared of needles but sat at my hospital bedside, told me to stand up straight, walk a little further and carry on.

The one who told me I could be anything I wanted to be.

The one who knew when I was upset, would wipe my tears and hold me in the strongest bear hug until I stopped.

The one who stayed in my room at the nurses' home so he could travel to London and visit me every day.

The one who I learnt to drive for when he could no longer do so and told me to go faster!

The man who stayed on the bus for a ride and was looked after by Bill and John the drivers.

The man who, in later years, held my hand as he walked so I could guide him as he once guided me. Who I bathed and clothed as he had done for me.

The man who was proud of me as I was of him.

The man who told me he loved me every time he saw me

Carry on Dad, Carry on