

Archive Tribute of
Gareth Bowen Davies
17/05/1943 – 20/01/2019

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(Working Script)

Gareth's story is one of a man at the centre of a happy and loving family, not a family that was untouched by tough times, but a family who's love for each other and Gareth's example of how to show that love had made all their lives better.

His life started in tragic circumstances. He and his twin sister were born on the 17th of May 1943 at home in Maddox Street, Tonypany. Their mother Gerith Mair, died during childbirth. The twins Gareth and Mair, were named after her and were both very small and not expected to live.

Their father Dai was a Sergeant in the Army and was called home for the funeral, but the invasion of Europe was soon coming, and he had to return, not coming home again until after the war, having fought in France and across Europe.

The twins thrived in the care of their maternal grandparents, who with the help of their Aunty Lil brought the twins up in a loving home, with Aunty Lil calling around twice a day to help with the children.

After the war Dai returned home and they all continued to live with their grandparents in Maddox Street, until their grandmother died when they were five and Dai and the twins went to live with their Aunty Lil and Uncle Dai.

Aunty Lil was wonderful to them and their happy childhoods continued. They didn't have much and spent most of their early years under rationing conditions, but they didn't really notice as everyone around them was in the same boat.

Welsh was spoken at home and so when they started Blaen Clydach infants they had to learn to speak English, so from then on, English was spoken at

home and the only Welsh they heard was at chapel on a Sunday. We will later sing Calon Lan in memory these times.

Mair told me that Gareth was a fun-loving child. There were lots of children in the area and they had many friends. Gareth and his friends spending most of their time out playing, mostly on the mountain behind their home.

In school he enjoyed art more than any other subject and in his teens he was a member of the sea cadets. As they reached the end of their childhood they didn't look much like twins; Mair was tall and thin while Gareth was short and stout, earning him the nickname Podge. But while Mair stopped growing Gareth continued, he overtook her and became tall himself, though the nickname stuck.

At fifteen he left school and became an apprentice painter and decorator with the council. One night when he was sixteen he went, as usual to the Boys' Club in Llwynypia, not knowing his life was about to be changed.

Because that night he met Ann, the love of his life. They courted for four years before getting married. Ann told me that he didn't used to come to the door to call for her, but would wait at the end of her street and she can still picture him standing under the street light wearing his long trench coat and smoking a cigarette, until she came out.

When they were first married they moved in to a room in the house of Ann's Auntie Eirlys and Uncle Richie for a while, before they shared a house with Ann's sister Eira and her husband Cliff. Just after Lesley was born they moved into a home of their own in Thomas Street.

They were still living here two years later when twins Carol and Gareth were born, but sadly, baby Gareth only lived three hours.

Soon after they moved into 9 Knoll Terrace, which was to be the family home to this day. When they arrived Ann told me, they didn't have a cot, so Carol's first bed was a drawer in a sideboard. Leanne came along six years later, and the family was complete.

If asked what he did Gareth would have probably have replied that he was a painter and decorator. He was good at his job, he enjoyed it and was proud of his work. When he worked around the home Ann could see how meticulous he was, though his attention to detail spoilt watching home makeover programmes for her with his constant criticisms.

But that was just his job, not what he was. From speaking to his family, it was clear that his answer should have been that he was a husband, a father, a grandfather and recently a great grandfather, it was his love of his family that defined him as a person.

He was the main cook in the house, always cooking when Ann was in work and always making sure that there was food on the table when the girls came home from school. He was always up early and raring to go. When Leanne was older and working, he would wake her up for work in the morning, have her breakfast and a packed lunch ready and want to know what she wanted for her tea.

Gareth and Ann never had much, but whatever they had, they gave to the girls. Lesley told me how, when he once won some money on a bandit, he used all his windfall to buy her a trike.

As you can imagine with three girls in the house, one of whom Carol, Gareth always jokingly called the black sheep of the family, there were quite a few arguments. Ann always threatened the girls with the usual, "Wait until your father gets home." But when he got home he would not shout at them, instead he would listen while each of them had their say and then he would sort it out, never raising his voice.

When he was a child Gareth played on the mountain and as an adult he took his girls and then his grandchildren on long walks on the same mountain. He was a very proud grandfather, spending as much time as he could with his grandchildren, Rachael, Tamara, Shauna and Hollie and great grandchildren Cain and Lexi.

Except when they were newborns, he was never too keen on newborns. But as soon as they were toddling he loved spending time with them and they adored him. He enjoyed teaching them things and they fondly remember him teaching them the skills of crabbing when they were in Cornwall. He was also very fond of Carol's dogs Billy and Breeze

For many years all the family would get together at Knoll Terrace at Christmas and in the summer, Ann would cook and Gareth would be at the centre of whatever was going on enjoying every minute of having his family around him.

He and Ann enjoyed their time together as a couple, particularly going on coach trips, they always had the next trip booked and visited many places, but Gareth's favourite place to visit was Cornwall. Their regular coach trips stopped when he was sixty and finally decided to learn to drive.

He was inspired by Lesley and Leanne learning to drive and all three of them passed their test with seven months of each other. He had never really wanted

to drive and wasn't very keen on cars, even after he passed, but it meant they could go on trips in the car.

Gareth enjoyed watching rugby and having long discussions about the game with Ernie. He loved watching Wales and Cardiff Blues games at home but none of the family could understand why he always watched the TV with the sound off while listening to the commentary on the radio.

He was a fun loving person who enjoyed meeting people, but he was also a quiet and private person who didn't like arguments and was honest with people and would never be two faced to others.

Gareth has been Ann's carer for some years which took up most of his time. He always put her first, then his family, with himself coming last; this meant that though he has suffered several bouts of ill health he would never complain. If asked how he was, he would always answer "sound as a pound," so that his family wouldn't worry, even when he wasn't.

Gareth was admitted to hospital after collapsing at home and underwent an operation. He was looked after in the intensive care unit at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital until he died.

The family want to thank the staff on the ward for the great care and kindness they showed to Gareth and the family when they visited.