

The Funeral of

George William Joseph King

23rd May 1933 – 10th February 2018

Hastings Crematorium
21st March 2018, 12.30pm

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The Tribute

George was born in Leicester in 1933, but grew up in London. He was the third of four children, and the only boy, and was very much the “blue eyed boy” of his Irish mother Hannah. In London, his father, also George, ran a pub called The Corner Pin, and his mother ran a B&B called The White House.

George originally trained as a painter and decorator, but during his National Service he re-trained as an electrician. That was his job for the rest of his life.

The work took him abroad, to Amsterdam, Saudi, Russia and Germany, and involved him in some of the major infrastructure projects of the 20th Century, from airports to power stations to fitting out the QE2.

He met Marilyn in the mid 50's, at a dance in Aberaeron, when he was doing some work there for the Milk Marketing Board. They married in London and this became their home, until they moved to Hastings in 1963. Whilst in London they had three children, Trevor, Johanna and Debbie.

George was always a snappy dresser, and in those London days of the late 50's and early 60's he has his suits made. His tailor got him to pose in one of them, and took photographs, out of which he got a cardboard cut-out made to stand in the shop. So one of George's more unlikely activities was being a male model! This delighted his sister Emily. He liked his cars too – Debbie remembers a Humber and a Zephyr in particular.

When they moved to Hastings, Marilyn ran a guest house and George worked at Dungeness Power Station. It was there that he surprised the family by bringing home a little puppy, Trixie, a black lab cross. One of the men working on the power station had brought in a litter of puppies one day, saying that he was going to drown them if some of his mates didn't take them on. The man filled a bucket with water and I guess they took him seriously, since several of them headed home that night with a puppy in the car.

Though they separated while the children were still young, George and Marilyn retained a connection as parents. George had a small flat in Hastings and would return there after his work abroad.

Marilyn ensured that he continued to see the children – Debbie has a vivid memory of meeting him on Sundays when she was small, and insisting that they went to church so she could go to confession and holy communion. George was not keen, and tried to persuade her to go to a film, or out for a meal – or almost anything else! He must have been relieved when her commitment to religion waned as she moved on to secondary school.

Later, the family had another beloved dog Tara, a red setter. George would walk her in Linton Gardens when he was home from his work abroad. He loved that dog so much that, when he came back from Russia with some caviar, he was found feeding it to her on toast.

Although George mostly worked out of the country, he bought a house in Battle, and then, when he was working for the BBC and on a prison in London, he sold up there and moved to Croydon

When he was 60, George had a triple bypass operation, and retired, spending the next 23 years in Croydon. He was the chairman of the residents' association for a while, volunteering at the community centre, and taking care of some of the communal jobs, especially the washing machines. He loved walking, and would go out for a walk first thing in the morning to get a paper, and after his early evening meal. He was well known locally, and would always stop for a chat, quite often passing on information that he had picked up from his newspaper or on the radio, he always had a story to tell, or knew a man who knew a man who knew a man who...

His sociability stopped at his front door, though – he was not one to invite people in and didn't really like having people in his home. That was a place private to him, where he could sit in his recliner, read the paper, have a cup of coffee and have a good snooze.

He followed the racing when he was younger, but gradually lost interest in later years, but his passion for Fulham football club remained strong, and even with his diminishing memory in later life he could recite the names of all Fulham players from the 50's to the 70's.

He stayed with his children when he needed their support, – he spent some time with Trevor after his bypass, and later as his health began to fail again, he often stayed with Debbie. When he was fitter, this was a mixed blessing at times, because he always wanted to dig over her garden – even after she had done it up beautifully, with a new lawn and flower beds, he would dig up her flowers, leaving a pile of bulbs in heap on the path. It really didn't need digging!

In his final years, George suffered from both lung cancer and dementia. The dementia, which affected his short term memory, meant that he often forgot he had a terminal illness, which was probably helpful for him, but not necessarily for his children who kept on having to explain to him why he was going for a hospital appointment. He never lost his appetite, though, and his hospital trips were made in part memorable by the food – the Royal Marsden was the “shepherd's pie hospital”, and trips to Croydon University Hospital, where he didn't like the food, were made a little more memorable by the meals that Debbie and Trevor would take him for when he got out. Then, of course, there was the time he absconded down the fire escape from the hospital in Croydon, which for a frail man showed how resourceful and determined he could be.

Debbie was alerted by good neighbours if things seemed to be going wrong with George, and Trevor would often run her up to Croydon when they were needed. In fact there were many trips made up and down to Croydon by Trevor and Debbie, a five hour round journey. By then, George thought they only lived down the road and once even asked Trevor to pop to the shop for him to get a jar of Coffee. Trevor said he would if he didn't live 70 miles away!

But he was still able to make decisions, and Debbie worked very hard to make sure that was respected, and that people asked his opinion, and helped him to

make choices. He remained self-reliant as long as he possibly could, enjoying M&S microwave meals, a daily sandwich, and plenty of coffee.

George came back down to Hastings from Croydon in December, as his health worsened. This period was enlivened by a visit from his grand-daughter Lucy, whose job with the Las Vegas Tourist Board had started to send her to Europe. He was very happy to hear about what she was doing, and proud of her achievements.

Though he had been living with a terminal illness for nearly two years, it was finally George's heart which gave way, in Baird Ward at the Conquest on the 10th of February. Debbie, who was with him, told me it was a very gentle death in the end, with him propped up on pillows, facing out of the window towards the pond and the trees.

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 George.

