

Peter John Start

30th November 1932 – 10th June 2019

The Tribute

Peter was a proud son of Southwark, where he was born on the 30th November 1932, the second youngest of Charles and Marguerite Start's six children. On Peter's birth certificate, Charles (who was always known as Jim) is described as a "sewage labourer" though in time he rose to be a sewage foreman, and apparently he bore a strong resemblance to Winston Churchill. Like many young Londoners of his generation, Peter was evacuated during the war, to a farm in Cornwall, of which he had very happy memories, particularly of a horse called Prince.

Back in London, he finished his schooling at St John's, near Waterloo, becoming the head prefect – an achievement he remained proud of all his life and mentioned to his children often. Nevertheless, as most people did in those days, he left school at 14, first working in a solicitor's office, but then following his elder brothers into engineering, as an apprentice.

Peter and Margaret first met when she was 16 and he was 21, at a dance school, and they went out together for six weeks, after which he dumped her because she was taking up too much valuable time which he could have spent on his football or his cricket. They didn't meet again for another four years. This time they met at the Locarno ballroom in Streatham, and made a date for the following week. Margaret fully intended to stand him up, as a payback for what had happened before, but her mother (who had taken quite a shine to this tall, good looking, well dressed young man) insisted she went, even if it was just to tell him she wasn't interested. A year later, they were married, the beginning of sixty happy years.

Their wedding, on the 20th December 1958, was a day to remember. They married in the afternoon, but in the evening, it was Peter's firm's annual dinner and dance at the Waldorf, so they celebrated the wedding in very grand style.

He still spent quite a lot of time on his various sports – football, cricket, tennis and table tennis, though he gave up football when Melanie was born – his father told him he couldn't afford an injury now he had a family to look after. But he went on playing cricket for a long time, and later took up fishing and golf, often with played with David Lawrence, the husband of Margaret's sister, Josie, with whom they had a long and happy friendship.

And in his working life, he continued as an engineer with Laystall Engineering until he was in his mid-40's, and then went to work in Trading Standards for Southwark Council until he retired at 56. After which he was busier than ever, and couldn't work out how he'd ever found time to work.

His granddaughter Stephanie has written a tribute to Peter, which she'll now read to us:

However hard and sad today is, I know Dandy would want us all to be happy.....to be happy for the memories, to be happy for all of this love.

A life full of passion and love:

A love for sports....all sports; but mostly golf, fishing and cricket – it was his hobby, his joy and part of who he was. It filtered through him to his children and grandchildren.....he adapted all sports to make it effortless for Nick in his times of difficulty, and sport is Nicks life and passion thanks to Dandy.

A love for music....music will always remind me of Dandy – all music; he loved and appreciated it all! From Frank Sinatra, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Engelbert Humperdinck to Michael Buble, Gypsy Kings, Sergio Mendes and Ray Morgan. Musicals...I grew up on them with Dandy – Carousel, West Side Story, Grease....they made you cry, they made you smile, they made you think of Dandy.

A love for storytelling....Dandy was always telling stories, exaggerating and elaborating....but always telling stories. His days of engineering (his crooked little finger) and courting Nanny (and walking into lampposts)....to catching the biggest fish you had ever seen and all those 'hole in ones'.

A love for friends & family.....his children were everything to him and he was so proud of each of them, his grandchildren and great grandchildren adored him, as he did them....he dedicated his life to his family. He left an impression with everyone he met, all around the world.

But most importantly, all the love in the world for his wife...Margaret....Nanny. He showed us what a loving marriage is, how a man treats a lady, and what a lifetime of happiness looks like. He was one half of the most amazing and happy couples I've ever known. Dandy was a true gentleman, generous and kind....the most wonderful man we could have known...and we are so lucky to call him ours. If my boys turn out to be half the man he was, I will be the proudest Mum. To write all of this is the hardest thing to do, but it also makes me smile and laugh to think of the endless memories....I hope we can spend the

rest of the day sharing memories and laughing about Dandy...laughing until it hurts, because it only hurts when we laugh.

The world is a sadder place because Dandy is not here, but we are the luckiest people in the world to have had Dandy in our lives, we have a lot to be happy and thankful for – simply put, he was the best!

We shall leave here and meet later, where there will be strawberries...because I couldn't have my Dandy looking round and thinking 'Do what, no strawberries?' and perhaps a glass or two of Vodka Lemonade, because every Friday should have a little vodka in it.

Thank you, Stephanie.

And now Daryl, Russell and Melanie will share their memories of their Dad:

What Dad stood for

I can't tell you much that you don't already know about Dad as he wore his big heart on his long sleeve - so I won't try. Instead I'll remind you of what I think Dad stood for, which is Love, and Fun.

That dad loved his family is obvious to anyone that ever met him, but only those closest to him could really, truly feel the depth. His love for our Mum was a joy to observe, that it was equally returned was an absolute inevitability.

We all know that young children thrive on fun..... and we had it in bucketloads. This wasn't just dad trying to be a good parent, he got real joy out of having fun with his children, and later, his grandchildren. But fun loving wasn't confined to us kids, anyone who was lucky enough to have socialised with him would agree, and anyone that had a drink with him would definitely agree!!

Dad was tactile, hands on, engaging, and not afraid to show his affection.

So how do we, his children remember him?

Firstly, as a great big kid! But also, as;

1. A sportsman

2. *A man disinterested in materiality*
3. *A gentleman, and a gentle man*
4. *A man impossible not to like*
5. *A guy who struggled to hold a drink (ask me later to recount the 'half a can of tenants super story') and;*
6. *As a guy with a healthy disregard for health and safety (again, I'll tell you more later)*

We also remember him as a romantic, and of course as a colourful dresser!!

Steph shared with us just a few her and Nic's memories of Dandy. As for our kids, Hannah, Daniel, Georgia and Liane, fond memories of Dad include such gems as;

1. *'He taught me how to gamble' (of which more than one example)*
2. *'When he got told off from the lifeguard for sliding down the children's slide into the swimming pool with me on his lap'*
3. *Waiting excitedly at the front window for Nanny and Dandy to arrive back from America to visit us.*
4. *Breakfast BBQs*
5. *Dandy was the cause of me supporting Arsenal, even though he was too chicken to watch them on the TV!*
6. *And the worlds biggest hugs*

As for us, Russell, Melanie and Myself, among a billion happy memories we remember

7. *Unlimited time*
8. *Dad's love of a wide range of music, which he played loudly, usually on a Sunday morning!*
9. *Russ and I particularly remember*
 1. *being excited when dad took us to work, in an engineering workshop, overnight!!*
 2. *Teaching us to fish, swing golf clubs, hold a table tennis bat, play cricket, dig for worms and ... so much more*
 3. *Dad taking virtually every kid from the estate to the park to play massive games of cricket.*
 4. *Night fishing on the 15th of June, waiting for the season to start at midnight*
 5. *Walking, seemingly forever, in the rain, to get to the best fishing spot!*

10. *Likewise, Melanie remembers*
 1. *Dad teaching her to Waltz properly and;*
 2. *How to be a cricket wicketkeeper!*

We all remember with great fondness, Christmases in the flat in Camberwell when Dad would treat us to every possible flavour of fizzy drink from the off licence, and spend the whole time playing with the toys and games we were fortunate enough to get from Father Christmas. Indeed, for us, Camberwell was a wonderful time, even though we had to bathe in an old tin bath in front of the fire.....Mum and Dad made life a total Joy.

So, what did we learn from Dad?

Well, loads, including;

1. *That families who play together, stay together*
2. *What true love looks like*
3. *How a man should treat a woman*
4. *What is important in life, and what is frivolous*
5. *That life is so much brighter when you smile!*

We learnt about happiness. Indeed, I have said to a great many people in my life, something that dad told me long ago, which is not just a memory, but something that has become central to my own core belief, in that 'You can be no more successful than happy' the wisest of wise words!!.....on that basis, our Dad was the most successful man that ever lived!

*Above all, Dad showed us how to have **Fun**, and how to **Love**.*

Thank you so much for that – what a man, eh?

So, let's pick up the story at Peter's retirement. First he tried working in bakery – he stuck that for a whole day. He looked after Melanie's garden and did things around the house for her. And then he and Margaret began to work in pubs, and he began to sing in them too, giving full reign to that love of music which Stephanie told us about earlier. Peter and Margaret moved out of London in 1991, first to Caterham, and then to Limpsfield Chart, and then, rather surprisingly, their next move was to Memphis Tennessee!

At that time grandson Nick was involved in a trial treatment in Memphis, and the family worked out that, rather than travelling back and forth constantly, it made sense for them to live there, and Peter and Margaret went too – well, strictly speaking, they took a series of extended visits which, with short breaks every six months, lasted for seven years. While they were there Peter sang, golfed, and fished, built firm friendships, and he and Margaret travelled all over the States. One of these trips took them to Las Vegas, which, surprisingly, given that he was not at all interested in money, Peter loved. It was his passion for that enclosed fantasy world of the casino which later led him and Margaret to take up going on cruises, which offered both warm weather and lots of casino time.

They came back to England in 2006, and settled in their flat in Oxted, and in due course Peter became the idol of his first great grandchild, Charlie, who was his biggest fan, sharing his love of hats, and constantly talking about his Dandy.

Peter and Margaret went on 14 cruises altogether, and continued to enjoy them to the last – they'd only just got back from one when he was taken ill with the chest infection which was the start of his short final illness. Even through that, he kept on singing, entertaining the nurses in hospital with his songs – he was singing selections from Grease on the day before he died.