

A celebration of life

Dr Alan Pratt

16 January 1944 – 10 August 2019

10am - 11am 22nd August 2019. Wigan Crematorium

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Tribute by celebrant

Alan was born on the 16th of January 1944 to Florrie and George Pratt in St James Street, Lower Ince. He was their third child, and a little brother to Frank and Marie. Mum and dad were hardworking folk and recognised early on that Alan was an incredibly intelligent child. Florrie was, at that stage in her working life, a cleaner in the library and Alan had a voracious appetite for the books she brought home for him. He was the only one in his class that passed the 11plus and went to Hindley and Abram grammar school. The West Coast main line ran by the bottom of their road and Alan became an avid train spotter, he dropped the spotting but always loved travelling by train and bus, he never learnt to drive.

He was sporty, mad for cricket – he had the best bowling figures on the school team - 7 for 15?! He played football, but Rugby League was his passion and the story goes, that he was supposed to be playing in a match for the school team but went watching rugby with his mates instead and it was such an exciting game that the pies in his pocket got squashed!

He did his A levels and went to Sheffield Uni from 1962-65 to study economics and economic history, where he was mentored by Syd Pollard. In his final year he was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, the impact and nuances of which he grappled with throughout his life, (*I believe there are many stories to be told!*) but he was tenacious and finished his studies and embarked on research at Sheffield. However,

he'd always been homesick, so came to home to Salford Uni to do his masters and got married to Hilary in 1966 and they settled down in Hindley.

Alan took his first teaching job at Wigan College of Technology and the couple had Jonathon in 1968 and Gareth in 1972. There are many stories about their happy family life... days out... holidays... Alan teaching the boys cricketing skills, but for brevity (*something I believe Alan was unfamiliar with in his speeches*) Jon summed him up as "a reet good dad". Alan and Hilary divorced in 1983.

By then Alan had been working as a lecturer in social policy at *Preston Poly* for some years and he loved his job. He's always been a socialist (although would identify as a Trotskyist in his younger days) and he came from political stock. His mum was political, a pit brow lass, and her Dad was a local union figure and part of the general strike of 1926. He'd been a Labour Party member for most of his life and they used to meet in the Raven pub in Wigan. He completed his doctorate at Bradford Uni in 1986 and became Dr Pratt, published papers, wrote books, became head of school and presented at conferences (*usually on home soil as he had a fear of flying.*) He had a highly successful academic career.

And he was charming... humorous... a stylish man of great stature. Qualities which made Bev notice him in her final year at University, after which she phoned and asked him for a drink. They had their first date on the 8th of June 1994, Bev had mussels and Alan said *she ate them very skillfully*. He was a fantastic word smith, with a phenomenal memory and had a great sense of humour. It was a long courtship as Bev lived in

Fleetwood with her five-year-old daughter Abby. But Alan was so keen, that in the flourishes of new love, he made his way over to Fleetwood on public transport...he did say *never again* though!

The rest, as they say, is his(her)story...twenty-five very happy years together. He was a great stepdad to Abby, over arm bowling included, and Bev's family embraced Alan from the off, in fact Bev's sister Irene said, "*there was nothing not to like about him*".

Gareth married Claire, Jon married Philippa, and Abby moved to the States and became mum to Henry and Beatrice. It was the desire to see his grandchildren that finally prompted Alan to confront *his 45-year long* fear of flying and in the end, Bev said he managed the 9-hour flight quite easily... with a little help from a *Conquer your Fear of Flying* book...and diazepam!

Alan retired from UCLan in 2003... apparently his numerous and lengthy retirement speeches are legendary, and he and Bev married shortly after – ditto his wedding speech! They enjoyed tours and trips and stays at the Sun Inn and had fun living out themes for wedding anniversaries – Bev's ideas were infinitely more creative though!

Alan was a man who lived his life with passion and conviction, he was generous, caring and funny but with core socialist values as compass. He was never afraid to try something new or voice his opinion. He walked in Wigan Pride last year and loved the Wigan Diggers' festival... was just as committed to his values and beliefs as fellow Wiganer and great socialist thinker, Gerrard Winstanley.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the constant love of his life... WIGAN WARRIORS and as you see he is wearing their colours today. He had a dry and philosophical wit but when I asked what made him laugh, the reply was ... *St Helens losing!* He was supportive, loyal and gave guidance without preaching. He was cultured and knowledgeable, a grammatical pedant, loved art galleries, theatre and Shakespeare. However... he *could* be stubborn, and he did fall asleep in the pencil museum!

As alluded to earlier, Alan didn't take his diabetes too seriously – despite Bev's consistent encouragement, and about three years ago this started to catch up with him. Bev redoubled her efforts to introduce a healthier lifestyle under the radar and with some success, but unfortunately it was too late to stop this unexpected deterioration for Alan. He'd always been eccentric, the words *batty* and *barmpot* were used, and he'd never had a filter, so it wasn't until mid 2016 that the little but increasing changes in his behaviour were diagnosed as vascular dementia. Alan maintained presence in his many social circles and his family rallied round to support him and each other.

He continued his immense contribution to the research community through Dementia UK, but February this year heralded a rapid decline for Alan. He could read people very well and had a deep connection with those he loved. In his final days when the disease had greatly reduced his capacity, he still managed to articulate himself, as

exemplified by his response to Gareth when he told his Dad that *Bev was on her way* and he said *"I hope she is not in an incaltrant mood"*

Alan wanted to die at home and so his family ensured he got his wish. He listened to Springsteen and Bev had a lie down with him and he wound down quietly and peacefully...*the end of the corporeal life of Alan Pratt.*

Gareth

I learned a lot from my Dad.

I certainly learned a lot about male grooming! He was using moisturiser & facial toner 30 years ago, long before it became fashionable to do so, probably why he always looked so young :)

I learned how to be concise...by doing the complete opposite from him :). If ever I was off ill from school or had to miss PE for some reason & needed a note Dad was in his element, relishing any opportunity to write. On handing the note in to the teacher, I used to stand there uncomfortably for many minutes watching the teacher gradually start to smirk as they ploughed their way through Dad's epic tome describing my cold in Shakespearian detail :)

On a more serious note, I learned right from wrong. My first rugby game was in November 1982, Wigan were away at Leeds. Walking back to the coach after the match my Dad overheard a group of Leeds fans making racist remarks about Henderson Gill, Wigan's sole try scorer on the day. He might have been on his own with 2 boys but he wasn't having any of it & single handedly confronted them. I'm not sure they understood every word of the verbal dressing down that my Dad gave them but they certainly got the message that their behaviour was disgusting & unacceptable.

Like I said, I learned a lot from my Dad.

