

Michel Pierre William Prigent

1st October 1943 - 20th January 2019

Tribute

Michel Pierre William Prigent was born on the 1st October 1943 in Hereford, to Margaret, formerly Newbiggin, who came from a family of Scottish miners and amateur footballers and Pierre, an aircraft mechanic and a member of the FAFL, the Forces Aériennes Françaises Libres, known in the UK as the Free French Air Forces.

He was the eldest child of 4, with brothers Alain, William and sister Jean. The first three years of his life were spent in England and then in Brittany, but the family followed his dad's postings first to Tunisia and then to Bavaria. Having been used to the intense heat of North Africa in his formative years, Michel never really warmed up in anything less than this type of climate and even in the height of summer he would still wear enough clothes to ensure no risk of cooling down.

He wasn't a very focused student at school where he became bored with monotony and demands well below his capability; he wasn't a conformist by any stretch of the imagination, although he did have an interest in history and was an avid reader. His father realised that he needed something practical to stimulate him and he went at the age of fourteen to a catering school in Strasbourg.

Michel finished college on a Friday and with a few strings pulled by his dad, with contacts in the Merchant Navy, Michel started work the following Monday on boats working up the east coast of the Americas, from south to north and back again. Michel also completed two years' National Service, earning the grand total of the equivalent of £1 a month

A friend told Michel about his great experience as a chef at the Savoy in London and so by 1966 Michel was working very hard in several jobs and managing to save some money.

He was also heavily immersed in the vibrant and liberating life of London in the 1960s; politics and anarchist movements captivated his interest and music thrilled him and he soon realised that as a chef, he was working when everyone was having fun. So, with his natural ability in languages, his interest in the far-left movements and the need to live a simpler, more honest life, he followed a career which took him in new directions.

Michel met Caroline through the underground political movement and their daughter Sappho was born in 1973. Sappho enjoyed close times with Michel in her early years but as Sappho reached her teenage years contact became less regular, often sporadic. It remained this way for the next fifteen years and then contact and time together became more frequent.

Michel has lived in the same flat in London for over forty years, but he has travelled widely, back and forth to his family in France and to Somerset, and visiting friends throughout the world.

He has never had much of an interest in the media-led consumerist world and although he could be very generous, his was a frugal life in monetary terms but exceedingly rich in friendship, music, politics and literature.

He played the guitar and drums, was laid-back with a wonderful sense of humour, liked a drink or two, talked long and fervently, always read a daily newspaper, wrote and published articles, but remained in essence a private man. There has been much written in London about his career and achievements, and memorial services there will talk more of his political existence but the Michel you mourn today is brother, dad, Grandee and friend, a man who was contented with his life and never ever bored.