



A Celebration of the Life of
Nigel Jerome Edwin Watson

24th September 1947 – 16th February 2019

Cemetery Chapel, Tunbridge Wells

25th March 2019 4.30pm

Celebrant: Felicity Harvest
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The Tribute

Nigel was born in Southall, one of seven siblings, and grew up mainly in Putney and in Wolverhampton. He trained initially as a carpenter, and it was when he was working in a carpentry shop that he saw a man looking in through the window and waving at him. He waved back, he went out to say hello, and they got chatting. The man was Peter Green, and Nigel was suddenly at the start of an adventure which would last for most of the rest of his life.

I've pieced the story of Nigel's musical career together from what Josh, Alistair and Sandra have told me, and from what I've been able to find out for myself. If there are gaps and mistakes, I apologise – the twists and turns of the music industry, the way bands come together and split apart, and the intricacies of all those wonderful creative associations are sometimes quite hard to track. You will have a chance to talk later, at the wake, to make any corrections, and I'm sure you'll be able to tell a more complete story to each other than I will tell here.

The chance encounter between Peter and Nigel happened around the time when Peter was splitting from Fleetwood Mac, and they worked together on two solo singles, *Heavy Heart* and *Beasts of Burden*, the latter being credited to both of them. Nigel also accompanied Peter as conga player on a tour of the States with Fleetwood Mac in February 1971. Jeremy Spencer had suddenly left the band and they asked Green to fill in and help them fulfil their tour obligations (under the unconvincing alias of Peter Blue), and so Nigel went too, his first trip to the States and the start of his love-affair with that country.

Then Nigel headed east, spending several years in Japan and Thailand. It was during that time that he met Pixie, and they had a son together, Paul, who's with us today.

Back in England, he went back to carpentry for a time. He met Sandra in the George in Oxted in 1987, the year of the great storm, as she pointed out to me! Josh was born in 1992 and Alistair in 1995. Nigel and Sandra married in 1995 and they settled in Oxted. It was at this time that Nigel got back together with Peter Green, supporting him as he came out of rehab. Peter lived with the family in Oxted for a while, and in 1996 he and Nigel formed the Peter

Green Splinter Group, and released several albums over the following few years until the group split in 2004. Nigel sang, played lead guitar, and also composed many songs recorded for the albums.

As well as his time working with Peter, Nigel played with a huge number of musicians, including Carlos Santana, BB King, Otis Rush and Buddy Guy, and he was never happier than when he was touring. I've seen the poster commemorating his sold out UK tour with John Mayall and Peter Green – 30 gigs in 31 days. The house was crammed with awards, gifts and memorabilia, like the guitar which was given to him by Fender when he was off to tour Japan.

It was an amazing musical career. As Alistair and Josh pointed out when we met, he may no longer be with us, but you only have to type his name into You Tube or Google, and you can hear the great music he made, at any time.

Josh and Ali remember him as quite a strict Dad – when he was around - but as they got older they found things that they could enjoy doing together – he and Ali played music, and he enjoyed Josh's sporting activities, being quite a sports enthusiast – though not exactly a sportsman himself!

Looking back, the boys realise they had some extraordinary experiences – which seemed quite ordinary at the time, like having access all areas passes which allowed them to wander round the Fairfield Halls, or being given one of his CDs to take in for Show and Tell at school. Josh remembers going with the family of a school friend to Blackpool when he was about 16. They went to a blues café under the Tower, and there was a huge poster of Nigel on the wall. The owner asked Josh to sign it, and then got the home phone number off him so he could ring Nigel, his hero, for a chat. Ali once met a drummer from Iron Maiden, who was equally excited to find out who his Dad was, and ended up inviting the whole family to stay with him in Florida.

Alistair is now going to play for us, *Jumping at Shadows* by Peter Green

Alistair plays

Thank you, Ali.

When he wasn't working as a musician, he was a very fine carpenter, and could make anything which was needed. And he had many hobbies and passions,

most notably his racing pigeons and his Jaguars. He loved all kinds of animals and birds, whether they were in their natural settings, or the Koi in his pond. At one point they had 52 chickens, 2 ducks and a parrot, plus assorted dogs, and of course the pigeons and the koi. He'd go out for a walk and come back with a couple of grass snakes which he'd deposit in the garden. Sandra and the boys were of course left to look after this menagerie when he was on tour.

Josh is now going to read us *One at Rest*, by Helen Steiner Rice

*Think of me as one at rest,
for me you should not weep
I have no pain no troubled thoughts
for I am just asleep.*

*The living thinking me that was,
is now forever still
And life goes on without me now,
as time forever will.*

*If your heart is heavy now
because I've gone away
Dwell not long upon it friend
For none of us can stay.*

*Those of you who liked me,
I sincerely thank you all
And those of you who loved me,
I thank you most of all.*

*And in my fleeting lifespan,
as time went rushing by
I found some time to hesitate,
to laugh, to love, to cry.*

*Matters it now if time began
If time will ever cease?
I was here, I used it all,
and now I am at peace.*

Thank you, Josh

Nigel's last few years weren't really what he would have wanted, or what his friends and family would have wanted for him, with increasing ill health and lack of money meaning that he was forced to move around constantly, and able to get out less, though his last flat in Sevenoaks was a good match for his needs, and he was well looked after there.

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 Nigel.

