

Peter Kenneth Adams

26th May 1940- 31st December 2017

The Tribute

And to remind you of just who Peter was, we have some contributions from the Davison family – Adrian, Ines and Xanthe, will you join me up here, please:

Ines, can you start?

A meditation by John Donne

*No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.*

*If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:*

*Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,*

*And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.*

Thank you, Ines

And now, Xanthe:

Goldfish by Alan Jackson

*The scene of the crime
Was a goldfish bowl
Goldfish were kept
In the bowl at the time:*

*That was the scene
And that was the crime*

Thank you, Xanthe

And finally, Adrian

I've got a little game to play today, one all of us gathered here can enjoy, it's called "The first time I met Peter". I'll start.....

"The first time I met Peter"... I was in a foul mood. Candida, who I had met a couple of times, had left some keys for me to pick up from their house. I had flown in from India a day or so before, was jet lagged, my wife was unwell, my girls were very young, demanding and jet lagged, my older daughter, Bella, wasn't so young but still demanding, I had to go back to work the next day, to be blunt life could do one. The last thing I wanted to do that day was drive from Hastings to Wadhurst to pick up some keys. But it had to be done. I thought, I planned, that I would just go, say hello to Candida's husband (she was out) and then be on my way home, back in the car, just me and my bad mood. Five minutes max. So I turn up, knock on the door.....Peter answers..... Two and a half hours later I'm sat in the car giggling to myself, phoning Jayne saying "I've just met the most amazing man!!"

And that was it, I gained two friends for life. Candida came to work with me in a garden, expertly killing vegetation with gusto (a skill she has honed over the years to reach plant assassin status!) and as for Peter... every minute i spent in his company was a lifetime well spent. He helped

me so much in ways too varied to go into here. All I will say is everything he said about me, about my life, my situations, has turned out to be true, even if I didn't realise it at the time. Even now I remember Peter telling me, without any judgment, that things will happen in a certain way and sure enough they do.

He had a great sense of fun and humour so it's no surprise Ines and Xanthe adored him. As the fates have decided, they never had a grandfather in their lives so they decided to ask Peter if they could adopt him as their grandad, with the added bonus of a third granny in Candida thrown in! Win win as far as they were concerned. And, along with their choice of parents, a sign of their innate good taste! More importantly a sign of how Peter could connect with anyone; young, old, male, female, rich or poor. Even Vietnamese children with no English. He just got people.

He was, as you all know, a man of immense intellect. I'm not sure you could ever win an argument with him. He would also give you the shirt off his back. As it happens I like shirts, the brighter and louder the better. One time I was visiting he offered me a shirt of his, this shirt. He said "I don't wear it anymore, and it will suit you better, besides Ben hates it, don't know why! He wants to throw it out or give it to the charity shop! Besides, It suits you much better" Great! I had fabulous shirt! On the way out Peter said ", Adrian, do me a favour.... next time you see Ben, make sure you're wearing it! " Like I said you'd never truly win the argument.

They say you shouldn't arrive meekly at the Pearly Gates, but turn up with a squeal of brakes a cloud of smoke shouting "Wooo! What a ride!". Well, Peter liked to drive fast, certainly enjoyed a puff and crammed more in to his life than most of us here put together. A truly remarkable man, a remarkable life and a friend like no other.

I'm proud and honoured to tell the world I had a friend, the best of men, and his name was Peter Adams.

Thank you all.

Peter was born in South London in 1940, the fourth of five children. His father, Bill, a Scot, was in the Cameron Highlanders, his mother, Rose, half Italian, was a finisher for Norman Hartnell. One of his earliest memories was of the 1944 London bombings. He woke up one morning and saw that the house across the road was just rubble – it, and the family he knew well – gone. He had a lifelong hatred of war. Later he joined CND marches led by Bertrand Russell whom he knew socially and was one of the guiding hands behind the Greenham Common protest.

Although educated at Dulwich prep school, he left school, aged 14, to be a “barrow boy” in South London markets. His first stall sold fruit and veg, which he bought from Covent Garden, and transported on his horse and cart. He ended up with 12 stalls across London: he loved market life.

Soon he had shops, a garage, a laundry and a paraffin business. He designed and sold a vacuum cleaner and a washing machine. He had a recording studio in Soho. He found business creative, and it allowed full reign to his true passion – people. He welcomed the West Indians who had started to arrive in London, who became his business partners and friends. He opened the first supermarket selling West Indian food in Railton Road. Making a profit was just a bonus.

He travelled extensively – around Europe, to Hong Kong and mainland China, to Afghanistan (where he was looked after by the Pathan) and India. Later, he travelled more in his mind. Whitman, Blake, Donne, Neruda, Thoreau, and E P Thompson were some of his favourites. He had a soft spot for Robert Service and would happily read aloud his work. He would often quote Edmund Burke. “Let not your enthusiasm be your method of judgement “.

In 1965, he was charged with murder and was the first man to be convicted after the abolition of the death penalty. He didn’t do it, but when he was told in prison who had actually committed the crime, he abandoned his appeal because that person’s liberty would be threatened. The section in the book he wrote (later made into a film) which describes the murder, was written with the help of a novelist friend. Peter served 17 years.

By his first wife, Cynthia who was half-Chinese and a tightrope walker, he had two children, Lee and Lawrence. Lawrence died tragically when still a baby. His second wife was Shirley Cooklin, a writer and actress who had the distinction of playing a Cyber Queen in Dr Who.

Peter had an extraordinary ability to touch people. He was a Buddhist but, as he said at a spiritual retreat he ran in Wales, “when you’re dead you’re dead”. He had mixed with princesses – (literally, he knew Princess Margaret), jazz greats (Ella Fitzgerald sang happy birthday sat next to him on a sofa), the Great Train Robbers (childhood friends), writers, judges, and thinkers. But he was a very private man with no interest in status, money or fame.

In 1982, he met Candida who was to be his partner for 35 years. They have two children together, Jessica and Ben. He loved his family with a passion. He was immensely proud of Ben and fought hard for Jessica whose vulnerability made him extra protective.

Jessica needs a special mention as she’s not here today

It wasn’t that Peter loved her more than Ben, but her vulnerability made her special. When she was little and didn’t like to be touched, he would hug her and hold onto her until her body relaxed. And he could make her laugh like no one else could.

He always said she taught him much more than he could ever give to her

For nearly 25 years, the family lived in East Sussex, in Three Leg Cross and later Wadhurst. Peter was at peace there in a small rural community where he knew pretty much everyone. He loved children, helping people and doing something – anything – for charity. These were his happiest years. He created hundreds of paper collages which he would frame and would give away. I first met him through those collages, giving him some old magazines he could use.

I also saw him frequently as he sat outside the White Hart, always drinking coffee, passing the time with his many friends, and occasionally terrifying a Labour party canvasser or two! My husband has the distinction of being the only person he voted for in his entire life – Peter was no believer that politics

could change the world! Instead, he believed in freedom - of the mind and spirit. He saw himself as an enabler of other people. He wanted people to be free to be whoever they were - to believe in themselves.

George Pocock, who's come from Canada to be here today, is now going to talk to us about how Peter did this:

Peter was truly an incredible man and a great friend for many, he was a source of constant friendship, positivity and laughter and one of the most mentally strongest people going.

It was obvious to me early on that he thrived on life and interacting with other people, a man who genuinely cared about friends and strangers alike. Both he and Candida would often be talking to a new friend they'd just met, giving advice or helping in any way they could...a testimony to the man he was, as well as his best friend, Candida.

I only have the best of memories of my time with Pete. I'd often go round to see if Ben had recovered from the night before... obviously he hadn't...and Peter would be sat in his chair, listening to Van Morrison, smoking the biggest spliff you've seen, a new piece of his artwork on the wall that he'd just conjured up. We would start talking and this would turn into hours of conversation and story telling of an amazing life which you couldn't make up, sometimes I would have to ask Candida if what Peter was telling me true, it always was.

Before long Pete would have gotten up and started preparing food for me, it didn't matter if I wasn't hungry, he was cooking for me and just loved to cook. He hated photos being taken of him, so naturally I'd always try and get one...they always ended up of either him looking unimpressed, or of his hand blocking his face. Little did I know at the time that these impromptu pop overs were to be some of my favoured memories of growing up.

An extremely funny guy, he always had the quickest wit and forever a joker, often playing pranks out the blue. One time at the pub he

inexplicably poured my beer into my shirt pocket and and it just stayed there. Who even thinks of that...how could you find that anything other than funny.

Tayler reminded me of the time he and Ben were racing mini-motos and Peter, being the competitive man he was, wanted to join in. Obviously he couldn't fit on a mini moped, however we'd have all liked to have seen a 6ft 4 man try such a feat, so instead he lined up his car and off they went, Ben and Tayler and Peter. ...he was never going to let them win and he nearly wiped them all out in the process....we all have so many great memories and entertaining stories of him.

He truly was one of the most inspiring, intelligent, funny, witty and caring men around, a fantastic source of information and support to all, I'll value his friendship and my memories with him for the rest of my life, as I know will many others, and I'll never forget. Pete you were like a second father to me and I will always thank you for being there and being my friend. I know you were a strong believer in energy and that is all around us, well your energy will live on eternally.

Thank you, George.

Peter believed in instinct and positive energy. Respect – for people, the environment, yourself – was the one rule he lived by. Even in his last years, in Surrey, when he was frequently in pain, wheelchair bound and struggling to hold onto reality as dementia took hold, he still reached out to people. That was just the way he was and how he would want to be remembered.

His son Ben will now talk to us:

Thank you all for coming today. It's lovely to see so many familiar faces to pay their respects to my Dad and support me and the family. I've written this on my way to New York - a trip for Keeley's birthday which Dad was very excited about. He famously flew to New York on concord and remembered it vividly.

So I've been dreading this day! Even though he'd been ill for a long time, I thought this day would never come. I believe many here would know why I may say that...

Amongst his many qualities he was the most determined man I've ever met, and likely to meet in my life. He applied his determination to anything he set his mind to - particularly living and enjoying life in the moment! He loved life so very much.

He had a number of scares over the years where we had that 'chat' with the doctors. One famous occasion a few Christmas' ago he ended up in a coma on Christmas Eve and things weren't looking good! Then on Boxing Day we then had a call to come back to the hospital urgently as he'd taken hostage a small Chinese male nurse and had trapped him in the lift! He was out of his coma. He had said he wasn't going to let go until we got there and agreed to discharge him. We arrived, calmed him down, and of course agreed to discharge him - as we did every-time.

Apart from living, one of his favourite pastimes was having a good old chat!! He could chat to anyone about anything and usually find some common ground- this could involve anything from politics / food / art (creating art)/ relationships / music ... If common ground had been found, and a topic secured, this 'chat' could sometimes last for many hours !

Dad was of course famous for his stories. From his times in the markets in the 60's of south London / Brixton. The pranks he used to pull with his friends and the adventures they used to get up to. That mischievous side of Dad never left him. Even in his final months he'd still have a smile on his face when I'd be winding up Keeley or perhaps giving her bum a tap when she got up from her chair! His smile would usually follow with one of his famous winks!

He was an incredibly protective Dad -particularly with me and all my friends.

As you do growing up, you find yourself getting into a little bit of trouble now and again ... one occasion (of which there are a few) in our early teens a group of us were playing in Wadhurst near the fire-station - perhaps climbing trees and generally loitering - and the local community

support office was on patrol. He came over to tell us to stop what we were doing and then made an offensive comment about my pink t shirt! I liked that pink top! Of course he was just trying to embarrass me in front of my friends - and doing a good job! Then, as if by magic, Dad was driving past in his car. He spotted us and stopped the car in the road and rushed over to check we were okay. He was in way no aggressive, however he was known to the community support officer and had taken a dislike to him. Dad was always a good judge of character! Protecting us, he asked the officer to move on and leave us alone as we'd done nothing wrong, in a rather assertive way let's say, when suddenly the next thing we hear is backup was being urgently called over the radio... !! Backup swiftly came and happened to be two female officers - he charmed them of course and then they swiftly left.

My Dad has given me my entrepreneurial spirit... I'm lucky enough to be now running my own business which Dad loved hearing stories about. It's funny the business I now run is about connecting people. Very relevant to what he did throughout his life. He taught me to be respectful of people and to be very careful of who you trust in life, which I'm sure has helped me along the way, building the business I have now.

I'm going to miss him very much! You were the perfect Dad and will always remember you as that. I love you very much and will keep doing you proud. I will always make sure Mum and Jessie are looked after.

I promise you that.

I have a couple of thank yous - firstly on behalf of my mum and I thank you to Keeley for being there for the last 4 years - giving up half your weekend to come and see my dad. Particularly in the last month your support to both Mum and I has been amazing.

Then onto my mum - she has been a loving wife to my difficult but loveable dad for 35 years. She has stood by him through many highs and lows and I know they loved each other very much. Well done Mum for the final 8 years where Dads health started to go down hill. Well done for the last 18 months where you drove 2 hours most days to go and see him in the care Home whilst always making sure myself and Jess were doing okay. You've done an amazing job and kept Dad in this world until the very end where we've got some amazing memories. One last story - a

very brief one - I was pushing Dad in his wheelchair in the park a few months back. We spotted a dog and their owner. Dad calls out 'you look beautiful' . The rather glam woman turned round smiling and Dad said – 'Not. you the dog'.