

# **Archive Tribute**

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(Working Script)

**Peter Ignatius Smith (1947 – 2019)**

Peter was born in Belfast on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1947, the second child of Terry and Bridget. He was brought up together with his elder brother Terry and younger sisters Nora and Kathleen by their mother, who worked hard to provide for them in what Terry told me were hard times.

Their Nanny used to help looking after them after school, and in the summer they visited family in Dundalk, where they were looked after by an aunt together with her own and her adopted children; but this wasn't exactly a holiday and Terry and Peter had to work.

One of the few good memories from that period was walking in the Black Mountains, which were very near to their home in Belfast and where the family would often go for walks together on the weekends.

But their lives changed when Peter was eleven and the family moved to Fairford Street in Barry. Peter hadn't liked school in Belfast and the move to St Helen's didn't change this.

But he joined the Army Cadets and he did enjoy this and later joined the TA. Terry told me he was always surprised that Peter didn't join the army, he enjoyed the TA so much. In the TA he was taught to drive and gained a life-long interest in the military and military history; he never forgot his TA number and always supported Help for Heroes.

In the cadets he made many good friends including Peter Rees, Colin McKay and Terry Donovan, who he went about with in his teens going to the cinema and roller skating over the Island amongst other things. When he left school

aged fifteen, he started work with some of these friends in a sweet factory on the Docks.

In 1964 the family underwent another change. Terry was recently married to Brenda and their Mum, Bridget died. Terry and Brenda gave Peter, then aged fifteen, Nora and Kathleen a new home. Kate told me that Peter was always grateful to Terry and Brenda for this.

When he was seventeen and working as a pipe fitter at VIP on the Docks, he met his first wife Julie and they were married when he was twenty-one.

They bought a house in Llanbradach and Peter worked as a car salesman at Park Motors. It was while they lived in Llanbradach that Louise and Kate were born. When Louise was about eight Peter realised that Louise had picked up a Llanbradach accent, particularly that she said "pawkets" instead of pockets and so the family moved back to Barry, so the girls would learn to speak properly.

Peter got a job with Wincanton and became a chemical tank cleaner. Louise and Kate told me that they didn't see much of him as children apart from their holidays because he worked very hard to provide for them.

The girls were not spoilt but he made sure they had whatever they needed. So work took most of his time, twelve hour shifts a regular occurrence and little time for hobbies or past times other than reading books.

But he did make sure that they had good holidays. Each summer he would take the family to their caravan in Newquay, West Wales and leave them there for the summer, returning home to work and joining them each weekend.

In later years they started to go to Pontins on holidays where he enjoyed ballroom dancing, taking lessons at one point; and getting up on the stage and singing as part of the camp entertainment.

When he was home from work he would tell them stories of things that he and others had done, but as the girls grew older they realised what everyone else knew; perhaps not all the stories he told them were completely true.

Peter was an entertainer and while he would never tell a lie that could hurt anyone, he loved to embellish and improve stories, making himself or someone else the hero of an adventure.

He was also very knowledgeable and said that he and his brother knew everything, and if he didn't know it his brother would. He loved reading books and so was a mine of information on many subjects, information that he liked to share, though Carol said that most of his information was useless.

In 1994, and now single, Peter went to Bindles for a drink and met Carol. She was not sure of him, thinking him probably married, and the story may have ended there.

But the following day she told Haley about the Irish bloke she had met the night before and Haley said she knew his daughter Kate, that she had been to his house, that he was nice, and that yes, he was single. So, they started seeing each other and were pretty much inseparable from then on. Peter soon moved in with Carol and they started a happy, loving twenty-five-year relationship.

Peter continued to work hard at PM Rees and Sons and then for Certas as a tanker driver. This was the happiest he ever was in work, he loved his job

partly because he loved driving and partly because of the people he worked with.

When he reached sixty-five he refused to retire, he went on sick leave when he became ill last year and was still on the payroll and planning to return to work when he recovered.

Peter seems to have epitomized the phrase “work hard and play hard.” He had a huge work ethic, but he and Carol also knew how to enjoy themselves. They used to go rock and roll dancing and jiving at the Corporation Pub in Cardiff every week and thoroughly enjoyed their holidays.

First, they went to Gran Canaria and Lanzarote but then they discovered Ibiza, which was by far their favourite destination from then on. They loved dancing and would be out until two thirty in the morning, long after their younger relatives had gone to bed, tired and amazed at their staying power.

In 2017 his dancing prowess and enjoyment of dancing was shown when he attended all the rehearsals and took part in a flash mob dance performed by the family at Zoe and Lisa’s wedding.

Peter and Carol finally got married themselves last year, when, as Carol told me, Peter was finally sure. It was a secret ceremony that they only told their children and family about after the event, when they all went out for a meal.

And it was a big family by this time, Carol’s children Michael, Tracey, Michelle and Hayley were like his own in his mind; and meant that this man, to whom family was always the most important thing, was the grandfather of fifteen and the great grandfather of eight. A position he cherished.

Kate and Louise told me that he was able to be around for his grandchildren far more than he had been for them and was a wonderful Grampi. Sunday was his day with his grandchildren. Every week he went out with Nat walking with him as he sat in a pram, walked in a harness, rode on a trike and then a bike, taking him to the Island, the cinema and more recently to Costa. When Tris came along he became part of the outings until they were both too much for Peter to manage and so they took it in turns with their Grampi, alternate weeks.

But he wasn't there just for his grandchildren. He would do anything for you. If you broke down, you could phone, and he would calm you down and then come and get you. If you got lost, you could ring him, describe where you were and drawing on all his driving experience and love of studying road maps he would be able to direct you home.

If you wanted a lift home he would be glad to oblige, though his clothing may surprise you. On one occasion turning up at the Park Plaza to collect Louise and Kevin from a posh do wearing a shell suit and driving shoes and then coming into the hotel to get them.

Peter's children and family knew him to be a real gentleman, kind and loyal, a man who would never break a confidence or do another harm. But it wasn't until they read what other people said about Peter in the condolence cards they have received, and the tributes posted on line that they realised that was how other people knew him as well.

Peter became ill in January last year and his attitude and his courage as he went through his treatments have been an inspiration. He fought his cancer all the way, took each treatment in his stride and was determined to go back to

work. He began to deteriorate over Christmas and was soon admitted to the Heath with pneumonia.

The staff in his ward were wonderful to him and to the family when they visited. On his last day, a Sunday, many family and friends visited, with up to eight people around his bed at times, talking to him and stroking his hand. He knew the people he loved and who loved him were there with him.

Would that we all have a last day like Peter's was described to me.