

The Funeral of

Sydney Leslie Neilson

26th May 1932 – 15th March 2019

Eastbourne Crematorium, 5th April 2019, 1.45pm



Celebrant: Tasveer Shemza

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"Moon River" Richard Clayderman

The Tribute

Mick was born in Cleethorpes on the 26th May 1932, Tuesday's child full of grace, one of eight children to John and Margaret Neilson. John had been gassed in the First World War and died of heart failure at the beginning of the Second when Mick was only eight. Times must have been very hard for the family and his brother Jack remembers how they all had to leave school early in order to start supporting themselves and the family. The Scunthorpe Steelworks was the local employer and that's where they all started out.

Clearly, they were a bright bunch however, and although without qualifications Mick taught himself Maths and Geometry and quickly rose to be a foreman. He was intensely practical and 'mechanically minded' and if there was anything to do, the family soon had a well-used phrase "ask Mick"!

This is a close knit and loving family. They lived together, worked together and went out together. Mick met Pauline at Campbell's Dance Hall in Scunthorpe and they became husband and wife in 1955. Their honeymoon was spent at the extremely grand hotel 'Mapleton' in London and when they bought somewhere of their own, this was also called 'Mapleton', but in Winterton. It was their pride and joy. Bought in 1968 for £3,500 and paying extra for central heating, it had enough room for a self-built garage in the garden and this was important for Mick with all his DIY and car maintenance.

By this time, they had two sons. Steven was born in 1959 and Paul five years later. Despite, or maybe because of the age difference they became great friends. Paul says the garage with a pit dug in the floor, for mending cars, was like having their own private bunker, (especially when they put the wooden top across)!

Four of the siblings were particularly close. So, Jack and Ena (here today), Reg and Rose, Cis and John and Mick and Pauline spent time together week in, week out. They went to Redburn Working Men's Club in Scunthorpe and the Winterton Rangers Football Social Club. They loved dancing and Ena recalled the 'sequence dancing' they did in the

70's. Steven and Paul enjoyed spending time with these aunts and uncles and of course had lots of cousins too – there were nine altogether and we shouldn't forget Rinty the dog!

Mick and Jack had a particularly close relationship. In the early days they shared a car which was the only way they could afford to have one. Jack says the first was a Singer and Ena remembers it had a hole in the floor on the passenger side! After the Singer they had a Morris Minor. Jack had it for a week, filled it up and passed it over to Mick who did the same, week and week about. This worked very well, Jack says because Mick could always repair them, he worked seven days a week

It was a very happy home in Winterton. Mick and Pauline were excellent parents. Mum may have been the disciplinarian while Dad never fell out with anyone. Paul says they were “well fed, well clothed and well loved”. Mick taught them well too, showing them how to do it, then leaving them to work it out further themselves. It was a bit frustrating when he came along later and could do it ‘just like that’, in seconds, after the boys had been trying for what seemed like hours!

Sadly, Pauline died in 1989 and although this was a huge blow for Mick as they were devoted to each other, practical as he was, he took action. He moved in with Steven and began lecturing at Twickenham College. The apprentices he taught benefitted hugely from his lifelong experience. He taught them not only the skills for the job but how to make money by showing them the short cuts, so they could make a bonus.

He did this for three years and every lad passed. To show their appreciation when he left they rewarded him with a bottle of whisky and he was really chuffed.

It is testament to Mick that he shared all his good fortune with his family. When he received compensation for having asbestosis caused by working with insulation material, he took them all to Disneyland Florida for Christmas, in 1989. By this time Steven was married with three children Susan, Michael and Katie and Paul had Vicky, (with Simon soon to follow).

Thankfully the patch on Mick's lung never got any worse and he put this

down to not smoking and moving to Eastbourne. Mick really had a new lease of life when he moved here. Having visited Jack and his family, Mick had a taste of how enjoyable life could be on the 'Sunshine Coast'.

He went to an auction for the first time ever and bought a flat in Cavendish Place. It was perfect for Mick as it needed a lot doing to it. He even put on a new roof with Jack's help. Selling this he was able to buy number Forty-four and continue improving it almost until the end.

Mick loved his home but he loved travel too. Particularly memorable are the cruises to mark special occasions. Pauline and he went to The Bahamas for their Silver Wedding and for his 80th, ten of the family took a cruise around the Med. Mick said "He'd never been kissed so much"!

Mick's good friend Alex who he met here in Eastbourne, sent me some thoughts and I'd like to share them with you now. He says:

'I've known Mick during the latter part of his life when he had suffered from ill-health re his heart and knee operations. He was never one to complain and I really did admire his resilience and fortitude.

Very strong physically he was a gentle person with a pacifist outlook on life and never quarrelsome. He was of a kindly disposition and always helpful and prepared to put himself out to assist others, particularly with do-it-yourself jobs indoors and out. I enjoyed the fact that he never used bad language and that he had little interest in sporting events, except of course playing golf and watching snooker on television.

A great 'do it yourself' man he was working right up to the end by adding to the front entrance of No. 44. It was a mammoth job but it focused his mind and it certainly took up his time. It was

almost unbelievable that an 86-year-old would take on such a task!

He relished retiring to Eastbourne and loved the opportunity of visiting the seafront which was close by. The pier and the carpet gardens were favourites. Over a few years he accompanied me to many of the seafront hotels, cafes and pubs to have a coffee or tea during the afternoons. It was a perfectly sociable means of seeing the premises and spending an hour to two watching the world go by in an unhurried way. It was also my way of encouraging him to exercise as the walking, although not hurried, was beneficial. He was an easy companion who never ruffled anyone's feathers.

He also welcomed the opportunity of hopping on buses to Newhaven, Lewes, Seaford, Bexhill and Hastings and enjoyed getting to know these towns.

He was understandably very proud of his expanding family and enjoyed his trips to Germany with Paul and Steven in recent years. He was well travelled during his life time with family holidays in Spain and the UK and even tiptoeing into Scotland on caravanning holidays. During the last third of his life he travelled to see much of the world with friends and ventured as far afield as China, USA, Russia and South Africa.

In recent years he had difficulties with new technology and wasn't keen to talk to companies re broadband, TV, etc. and I used to help out as he had a slight hearing problem.

I got very acquainted with Sydney Leslie Neilson's name, date of birth, Postal Code and telephone number when getting through to the likes of Talk Talk, Sky, motor insurance companies, monetary affairs websites, council issues, etc. Giving passwords usually included his school at Gurnell Street in Scunthorpe along with Spain as being a favoured spot when the family holidayed. So, of course, he would talk about those places. It was no strain for me on the phone as Mick and I talked while waiting in the inevitable queue. Some of the calls could last for up to an hour and a half but because we shared the burden it made it easy for him.

He was well respected and will be much missed by all who knew him”.

Reflection music: Michael Bublé ‘Forever Now’.

Alex also summed Mick up particularly well, he said:

“He was an asset to this world by being a father to two splendid sons, a husband, a brother, a brother in law, a grandfather and great-grandfather, an uncle, a reliable neighbour and a very good friend to many including myself”.

Leaving music: ‘Time to say Goodbye’ by Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman.