

Terence James Dashwood, 17th September 1937–8th April 2019.

A tribute by his daughter, Sara Bains

Welcome everybody,

My father was very helpful in that he was meticulously organised about his final wishes – it was all going well until I read the bit about the request for myself to deliver his eulogy – thanks Dad!

Terry, Grandpa, Uncle Terry, Jim, Dad.

A kind, intelligent, loyal family man who was full of integrity and a gorgeous smile when he dared to let it beam!

Dad was an only child, born to Ivy and Jim Dashwood in the East End of London in 1937. Born within the sound of Bow Bells (which perhaps explained his love of cockles and jellied eels) and living in Trevelyan Road Stratford until he was 3, he was then evacuated to Sandy in Bedfordshire and billeted to share a 2-bedroom house with the King family. He told me that one of his earliest memories was journeying back to London on the black out train to visit his aunt Gladys who had remained there for the duration of the war.

I think it was in Sandy that he first really felt love, and this came in the form of his self-confessed Fairy Godmother, Mrs Sook, the lovely, kind and caring lady who lived next door. Mrs Sook had her own disabled son called Percy, but took my Dad very much under her wing, looking out for him, buying him comics on a regular basis and taking him to Sunday School.

My Dad's own father, my Grandad Jim, had never gone to school, illiterate until he joined the army as a young adult, but a very clever man, savvy as they come and with a razor-sharp wit. Dad was encouraged to take the entrance exam to Bedford Modern School by one of his teachers who spotted his potential – he passed with flying colours and was subsequently always an advocate of the benefit of a good education.

Aged 18, it was during confirmation classes at St Andrew's Church, Biggleswade that he met my mother (Rosemary) Fay Thomas. He was welcomed with (mostly) open arms to the Thomas family and clearly benefitted from the sense of family that this afforded him, including my mother's pesky little sisters, Ray and Rossi who at times delighted in opportunities to plague the courting couple. It was really endearing to hear recently how Dad looked out for his little 'sisters'. Described by them as 'kind' and 'patient' and with an impressive appetite for bread and butter sandwiches!, he would bring them sweets, take them to the cinema and was keen to share his eagerly learnt scientific knowledge. He used his engineering skills to build them a crystal radio set so that they could listen to Radio Luxembourg under the covers at night, he taught Rachel how to use chemicals to develop photographs and Rossi how to roller skate, and fittingly bought them Beano and Dandy comics in the same way that Mrs. Sook had once done for him.

He was conscripted for 30 months of National Service in the RAF, where again his intelligence was recognised, spending most of this time based near Doncaster and hitchhiking home down the A1 to Biggleswade when on leave where he was grudgingly made to hand over all his wages to his mother in return for his holiday board and bread and dripping sandwiches!

He started work at Goldington Power Station near Bedford, cycling on his “cool” green bike with drop handlebars and went back to the (literal) Big Smoke on to be employed as an industrial chemist by the CEGB at Littlebrook and Battersea Power Stations.

My parents got married in September 1962 and moved to rented rooms in Streatham where he and my Mother were regular visitors to the ice rink and had a landlady who was not at all keen on noise or children which was particularly difficult for them when my elder brother, Neil, was born in June 1964.

They then moved to Bromley where I came along, followed by Stuart a couple of years later.

He set up enormous tractor tyre swing in the garden for the three of us and we’d be out there for all hours, probably fighting over it! He painstakingly used his DIY skills to convert the garage into a play room for us, with a dark room at one end to pursue his love of photography. He was passionate about Arsenal Football Club, we had to take it in turns to accompany him to Highbury where he’d wink at the ticket seller and sneak us under the turnstiles - we’d always be in the stands behind the goal – me proudly in my red, Texaco jumpsuit.

He was always a keen gardener – sharing his knowledge and passion for homegrown veggies with me – every year buying extra “Blue Peter” seed potatoes for me to plant at home, and making sure I wasn’t too late to get my seedlings in.

In fact, as nobody can catch up with him now (if you know what I mean), alongside the regular home-grown vegetables, I can now share with you a little known fact about the range of his growing skills - with aid of some trusted accomplices, he was able to painstakingly cultivate illicit “plants” in the boiler room at the power station where the temperature and atmosphere was spot on. True fact! ... (Those cucumbers were the best I’ve ever tasted!)

Very keen to give his three children the best education he could, he and my mother took the bold decision to relocate to Sapele in Nigeria in 1978 so that he could earn enough money to educate us privately. His work, often beset by incredibly trying circumstances, was to start the running of a power station in the bush in a region where power outages commonly lasted several days at a time and where we often came a bit too up close and personal to local upset, dangerous snakes and not to mention the odd rare, but highly venomous spider that decided produce hundreds of tiny offspring on a web in our front porch – he ‘dealt’ with that one.

Locally revered as the adopted official chemist to test the quality of the swimming pool water at Sapele Social Club, this is where he also pursued a love of golf, cannily using his children as free caddies for the minimal price of a small, but rare bottle of coca cola, and where he quickly became a club badminton champion – possibly due to the fuel of all those ‘free’ avocados he acquired from the tree outside his office at the power station.

Returning to England to continue work with the CEGB after 2 and half years, the family re-settled in Bromley, Kent.

Cathy, my best friend from boarding school, reminded me last week that my parents took her out to lunch with us after our confirmation – her own parents in Tanzania and unable to attend. Because he did not want her to feel left out, he bought her a little Wedgewood dish that she still has, so that she had something to open too. He was a very thoughtful man.

As a family of 5 we eventually moved to his dream location in Ightham. I say “dream” because we lived next door but one to a gorgeous village pub called the Cob Tree. He was very much ahead of his time - way before the invention mobile phones, he was delighted that he was able to get a signal on the landline portable handset from the pub bar stool (for the younger members here today, think literally the size, and the weight of a brick)– innovative and quite frankly, genius.

Laterally he would generously stay up waiting for us young adults after nights out at the pub or clubs, always ready to welcome us and our friends back (whatever the time) with an enormous platter of sausages and bacon! He did love having people around.

A work relocation to Nuclear Electric in Bedminster saw him re-settle in Cheddar, here in Somerset, in 1989. It was here that he became a very passionate walker and (occasionally militant!) member of the Ramblers Association and where he met his loyal and loving wife Margaret, our treasured ‘Oma’, with whom he was together for nearly 28 years.

He and Margaret also really enjoyed their holidays– he had a spirit of adventure – especially enjoying many trips to Italy together – relishing the company, walks, views and the local cuisine.

Closer to home he was passionate about finding the very best Michelin-starred pubs that he could combine his love of driving to – many a trip to Cornwall was meticulously planned not due to the hotel or the view, but often rather due to the proximity of the good food and real ale listed in one of his many AA pub guides!

In retirement, they shared a real passion for the outdoors – walking, maintaining their beautiful garden, keeping up with the vegetable growing and making sure to buy bags of apples that Margaret would then cut up daily for their (possibly over-sized) pet-like garden birds.

In order to achieve this, the subject of “weather” had become slightly obsessive – he had every single weather measuring gadget available - let’s just say he used his chemistry analytical side well – details from several thermometers, wind speeds and the milometers collected in one of the 2(1) rain gauges were often (and I mean often) shared with us – I specifically remember one Christmas when we simultaneously burst into laughter as 90% of the presents he opened in front of us were weather related...

He was delighted to extend his family to include Margaret’s children. Jamie and Joanne and lost his stiff upper lip at the arrival of each and every one of his 10 grandchildren, all of whom he adored.

Ollie, Eddie and Michael, Joseph and Mille, Matthew and Ellie, and Beth, Sarah and Danny.

He appreciated the privilege of being with us in Switzerland around the time of our three boys’ births, and was always keen to hear of the exploits of *all* of his grandchildren – loving receiving phone calls and postcards from them from far flung locations – especially when he could no longer really travel himself. Recently being able to meet his first great-grandchild, Matthew and Sarah’s 7-month-old little boy Harry, I know really touched his heart.

He always bought my boys a Liverpool Football Club calendar every year – if that isn’t kindness from a dedicated Arsenal fan, I don’t know what is!

A kind, intelligent, loyal family man. Let us all use to day to remember him and celebrate those happy times as we bid him farewell. We love you Dad xxx