

A celebration of life

Brian Feakes

16th August 1936 – 31st October 2020

10.40 Monday 16th November 2020, Southend Crematorium

a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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The Tribute

Brian was born on 16th August 1936 at Rochford Hospital to Ivy and Harry, he was their first child and was joined 18 months later by his sister Maureen. Both Brian and Maureen (aged about 8 and 6) were evacuated to Rochdale as the war progressed. They returned to Southend a couple of years later to live in Beresford Road, near the Kursaal. Their parents separated, life was difficult, but they had each other and despite their "spats", Brian didn't mind Maureen tagging along. There were adventures to be had, finding their way into the Kursaal gardens in the winter and being caught by the security guard. Brian's love of nature and knowledge about birds started early and made the hikes down Rebels Lane to Shopland Church and Creeksea, fun. Maureen honoured this interest in later years by buying him a collection of model owls in Aller Vale or Devon Ware pottery.

When he was 18 Brian went on to do National Service returning North and serving in Yorkshire with the Royal Air Force Air. He spoke fondly of this time and when his service was complete, he returned to Southend obtaining a place at Southend Technical college. Brian started his working life in the technical office at Southend airport, alongside his lifelong friend Terry. Terry was an only child and always said Brian was like a brother to him, they remained good friends until Terry passed away a couple of years ago. They enjoyed working together at the airport, meeting up with other friends including Ken and Derek, brothers who Brian had also known since his school days. Brian kept many of his friends from school days and his working life, and they were to remain a loyal group for so many years.

Norma was working at the local library and met Brian through a mutual friend. He would often cycle past the library and wave at her. They started seeing more of each other, going to the Penny-Farthing nightclub together. Norma fondly remembers watching the moon landing in 1969 at the Rose pub with Brian. On the 12th June 1971 they married at St. Andrews Church in Shoebury. Norma and Brian were married for 49 years. They bought their first house in Eastern Close Southend. Baby Daniel was born in 1973.

Life at Southend airport was changing. As Stansted airport opened Brian did not want to move the family there, so he took redundancy in 1975, starting a new job as a postman and remaining there for 22 years. The family was then completed by the arrival of Annette in May 1975.

Brian loved family life, and his new job as a postman. Its early start allowed him to spend much of his time with his young children. There was a move from No. 1 to No. 8 Eastern Close when Norma and Brian bought a bungalow with a large garden and lots of potential. He was able to utilise his technical skills, building his own furniture, decorating and generally fixing things rather than "getting anyone in".

Brian was able to use all his skills in the garden, not only to grow flowers but also potatoes, carrots, tomatoes runner beans and strawberries. His diaries record the results of his crops which were very impressive, self-sufficiency in fresh produce. He commented on the weather in every diary entry often in relation to his garden.

The whole family loved the garden being outdoors and appreciating nature. Family holidays were spent on beaches in Cornwall, Devon, Norfolk, and Suffolk, along with Abby, their West Highland White Terrier. Brian enjoyed sharing his love of nature, bird watching and sea swimming with his family on these trips.

Brian's only expectation of his children was to "just try your best". They never felt pushed into anything, their parents encouraged them to make the most of their opportunities and supported them to go on to both have successful careers in public service.

As the children grew up, Brian was able to pursue more of his own interests and the annual bird watching holiday with his friends including Terry, (who had been his best man,) Ken and Tony. It began in 1974, every April or May they would book the same cottage in Suffolk to visit Orfordness and Minsmere nature reserves. The group all had their roles and Brian's was "the sandwiches". They would finish a day's bird watching with a trip to the pub. This annual holiday kept running for about 40 years until about 5 years ago; a testament to their long friendship.

Brian and Norma's social life really picked up again once the children grew up, they were able to go back to their love of live music, especially Jazz. They had a lovely life together, going to the Cliffs Pavilion, Churchills and Saks even travelling to the Cambridge Corn exchange and the North Sea jazz festival in the Hague twice. Brian's music taste was quite eclectic, Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald and Queen as reflected in the family's choices of music for him today.

There were lots of parties in the garden and air show parties over the next few years. Brian and Norma enjoyed travelling together especially going to see Daniel, Yvonne and their three grandsons Ruairi, Finlay, and Ciaran after they moved to Holland in 2009. Brian and Norma also continued to take their own holidays in the UK and further afield.

Brian was a quiet man, independent and tenacious, he knew what he wanted from life and what was important to him. He was, as so many of his generation, not one to show his emotions easily. He had a stoic attitude to life always known to say "I'm fine" when asked, although he struggled for 30 years with mental health problems. His admissions to hospital with depression and anxiety impacted on his ability to enjoy life, and in recent years his walking pace slowed. Norma, Daniel, Yvonne, Annette, and Dave supported him though this.

He was a kind and caring man, immensely proud of his family and they were his greatest achievement. He always took a huge interest in everything they were doing. He took great pride in his grandson's sporting prowess (mainly cricket, football and running) and anything they did. He loved to hear about Annette's running, she always rang him first after a marathon with her running times.

He took early retirement from the Post Office, due to ill health, when he was 60 and by the year 2000 the couple had moved to a stunning flat overlooking the Thames estuary. Brian was able to enjoy the wonderful views from the flat, watching the birds and ever-changing coastal scenes. Brian was a self-taught man who educated himself in so many things, through his independent reading. He loved to learn about diverse subjects from history, space, archaeology, and anthropology. He was fascinated by the discovery of the Anglo-Saxon burial ground in Priory Crescent in 2003. He became interested in cameras, both in how they operated as well as in the photos he could take. He was very politically aware and ready to differ from others in his opinions, not forcing his views, but knowing his facts and taking a liberal view of life. He was an affirmed anti Brexiteer and understood the value of diversity in Europe and beyond. He remained curious about life and eager to learn new things this made him a fascinating person to talk to. A lovely man, gentle, kind and endlessly curious about life.