

A celebration of life

Paul Sanderson

24 May 1946 – 17 November 2020

Wednesday 2 December 2020
Cedar Court Hotel
Committal at Hey Lane Cemetery



a personal goodbye

Humanist
Ceremonies

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Born on 24th May 1946, Paul grew up in Chesterfield the eldest of six, often helping to look after his brother, Neil, and sisters Fay, Lori, Dawn and Tracey as his mother, Betty, worked as a crane driver. He earned a place at grammar school, but found it difficult to fit in there, amongst those more privileged than he; he used to bike to school past all the big cars dropping off students, including a Rolls Royce on more than one occasion. Paul was a big fan of his bicycle as a youth, regularly heading off to see his aunt in Askern, near Doncaster, or down to Chatsworth.

Paul talked of heading out with Neil to collect firewood, the two of them piling it up in an old pram. Neil really looked up to his big brother, and was happy to be introduced by him to a wide range of music, including the likes of Led Zeppelin. Paul always enjoyed seeing music live; he and Sonja used to go to watch Neil perform with his band, and Neil is going to perform for his brother one more time today.

Music: *In My Life* by The Beatles
Performed by Neil

It was when Paul was studying at Huddersfield Polytechnic that he and Sonja first met, at a mutual friend's housewarming. Sonja said she spotted him, sitting on his own and looking on at the festivities, and decided she wasn't going to let him get away with that, so grabbed his hand and pulled him up to dance, and that was that. Paul even gave her a lift home that night, in his Morris Minor. Paul and Sonja were together for 49 years, and Sonja is going to tell us more of Paul's life, and the man he was.

My Husband

When I first met Paul, he was quite a shy person and not very confident. He used to impress me with his scientific knowledge. I remember one country walk with him where we crossed a very wobbly bridge and he explained simple harmonic motion to me and how bridges could break when soldiers marched in harmony over them. His granddaughter Jessica, when she was little, once commented, 'Granddad must know where the dark woods are, because Granddad knows everything.'

His confidence grew as he found that he was equal to his peer group on his university course. His final year dissertation on Walsh and Fourier Transforms contained breakthrough work and was entered for a prize. We couldn't afford to have the dissertation typed up as it needed someone with a special scientific typewriter, so I hand wrote it for him. I was no wiser about the subject matter at the end than I was at the beginning.

His first job after university was at Marconi Space and Defence Systems in Reading. He worked on guided missiles alongside public school educated people and graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, but was able to hold his own. He then got a job at the European Space Agency in Darmstadt, West Germany. He revelled in his working-class background, and on his application for the job working on Digital Imaging of images sent back from the Meteosat weather satellite, he put that his first job was as a window cleaner. He and the director of European Space Operations had a laugh together about that at the interview.

He was a problem solver and was offered further contracts in Germany, and just before he left he was offered a permanent position. He used to regret sometimes that he had ended up writing software where working out the VAT calculation was as complicated as it got. When Paul went into care, he used to still read the New Scientist magazine and later he would pick up instruction manuals and read those. He loved watching Jerry, the handyman at the home, do his jobs.

Paul was a stubborn but principled person. When he once took a person to court that owed the business money, his barrister wanted him to take the religious oath when he was sworn in, because the judge was an ardent Christian. Paul refused and insisted on affirming. In the summation, the judge commented that he was impressed with Paul when he gave his evidence. He won the case. He never ripped anyone off and he always went out of his way to give more than was strictly required with his customers. He compared it to giving 4 and half ounces of sweets rather than the straight 4.

Paul was not really interested in physical activity. He used to say that if he broke out in a sweat, he would think he was ill. As a PE teacher, I tried to encourage him to try different activities but nearly all failed. We went horse riding once. Paul got on his horse, but it went for a drink of water and then hit its head on a nail. It bucked and reared and Paul nearly fell off. When we went on the ride, he kept saying that the saddle was loose. We ignored him thinking he was just whinging. His horse kept stopping to eat grass and we had to go back and get him. I told him to kick the horse with his heels to get it going but he said there was no way he was going to do that and have it bolting away. When we got back to the stables, Paul tried to dismount and ended up on the floor because the whole saddle slipped round. "I told you it was loose," he said. He never rode a horse again.

Paul was a really helpful and generous person. He was always the first to buy a round of drinks and at restaurants, no matter how many people were there, he would slip off at the end of the meal and pay the bill. If anyone protested, he would always say, "It doesn't matter - it's only money." Later, when he was in the throes of his dementia, he wouldn't go into cafes and restaurants, and if we managed to get him in, he wouldn't eat anything. It was a while until we figured out that it was because he couldn't work out the money to pay the bill.

His great love in life was his company - Videss. He started working in the garage and grew the company to employ 60 staff and a northern and southern office. He was a self-effacing man and you would never hear Paul boast about his accomplishments; in fact, he always thought he should have done better. He didn't have a separate office at work; his desk was with the rest of the staff. He inspired loyalty in his staff and thought of them as family. He was a great teacher - able to explain the complicated in simple terms and always with patience. His software was so successful because it was easy to use. He inspired the staff with his can-do attitude and a number of them went on to set up their own companies when Paul eventually sold out. One of his employees - Martin Page - who went on to set up his own company, said he would never have left whilst Paul was in charge.

Two of his employees paid tribute to him:

Glynn Morris said, 'I was very sorry to hear of Paul's passing. My years with him at Videss were some of my happiest working days. The "can-do" attitude he engendered and the team spirit he developed made the team at Videss something special - even now I am in touch with many of them. I will always be grateful to Paul and to you for allowing me to join you for a while.'

And Rich Bannister wrote, 'It is with great sadness that I learnt of the passing of Paul. I worked at Videss for just short of 10 years and I have nothing but fond memories. This was mainly down to Paul and the ethos he had. Paul created a very unique place to work, one that I had not previously experienced and doubt I ever will again. I am extremely grateful for being able to have joined the Videss family and made some great friends.

Paul was a good and kind man who thought more of his staff than of his customers, which is what made his company so very special. I am proud to have worked for such a great guy.'

The company took a toll on family life. He once joked that one day the girls were babies and the next they were applying for driving licences. This really summed up his involvement. I regret that he missed most of their growing up with the long hours he worked in the business. I also really regret that Emma and Chris' children, Kieran and Mimi, only knew him after Alzheimer's stole his mind away, and that baby Xander will not know him at all.

Paul loved music. Music of any sort, from pop songs to classical, jazz and brass bands. He got into trouble when he was living with his Granddad and Grandma for breaking a string on the piano because he was trying to play it from underneath, because it was always kept locked. His granddad played in a brass band and when he was a toddler his granddad used to take him to band practice, but he was never allowed to touch the instruments.

He always wanted to learn to read music but never mastered it. When Marcun packed in her piano lessons Paul took over her lesson. He had a set piano piece to learn each week and he used to rush home from work on the day of the lesson and ask Marcun to play it for him. Once he heard it, he was able to play it. One time he did this and he went to the lesson and played the piece perfectly, and the teacher said it was excellent, but it just happened to be the wrong piece to the one that was in front of him.

He could pick up any musical instrument and get a tune out of it, from Richard's bugle to Marcun's recorder to Emma's clarinet and Kieran and Mimi's toy pianos and xylophones. He used to play music really loudly. He once was vacuuming the lounge carpet whilst playing Led Zeppelin at ear-damaging loudness, but once the music stopped, he realised the vacuum cleaner wasn't even switched on. In the care home he drove other residents mad, drumming his fingers in time to any music that was on. In his last months in the care home, he still liked to play his guitar and the piano and he loved going to the Singing for the brain sessions run by the Alzheimer's Association. Lots of people there commented on what a good voice he had.

Paul's musicality stood him in good stead when we took up ballroom dancing when Paul was 50. He always danced on time. The highlight of our competition dancing was getting into the semi-finals of the Closed British championships at Blackpool. We missed the final by one point. He loved the competitions but hated dance practice. We made a lot of friends through dancing who would have been here today if they could.

Paul loved to talk to people and always had a welcoming smile. When we lived at the farmhouse, we had a footpath next to the house and he would chat to people when they were out walking. I would often find him sitting with strangers in the garden as he would invite them in for a cup of tea. At the care home he had the ideal friend in Barbara. She liked to listen and Paul liked to talk.

Paul was the great love of my life. When he didn't remember that I was his wife, in the later stage of his dementia, he kept asking me to marry him. Sometimes I would say, "I'm already married," and he would say, "Oh, that's a shame." He never wondered why I was there holding his hand. One time, when we walking up to the barber's shop, he again asked me to marry him and I said, "Yes, I'll marry you." When we got to the barber's, he said to him, "This is my young lady and she's just agreed to be my wife."

Our life together spanned 49 years and to me he has died twice: firstly on Friday 8th February 2019, when I could no longer look after him at home and he went into care; the second time on Tuesday 17th November 2020. I gradually came to terms with the first - now we all must come to terms with the second.

Rest in peace Paul.

As Sonja said, Paul had a great love of music, of all varieties, and he used to play many tunes on his guitar, and he and Tina would duet together. Even once Paul found that too tricky, and struggled to remember many of the pieces he had used to play, there was one song that stuck with him, which we are going to listen to now; it was Let It Be, by The Beatles.

Music: *Let It Be by The Beatles*

As Sonja touched on, Paul was not the most involved as a dad, but when he had the chance to share his interests with his children, or his grandchildren, he was an enthusiastic teacher. Tina remembers him being engrossed in her GCSE Electronics project, while Jessica was always fascinated by the scientific conversations she could have with her grandad. Paul perhaps found it easier to relate as adult to adult, and would make a point of calling in to see Emma when she was at uni in Manchester, and Tina in Leeds. Tina said he would always arrive with a cooked chicken, and a bottle of Bailey's; she blames her dad for converting her to the joys of alcohol!

And Tina is going to read a poem today, that she and Sonja have chosen:

When I Am Gone

By Mrs Lyman Hancock

*When I come to the end of my journey
And I travel my last weary mile
Just forget if you can, that I ever frowned
And remember only the smile*

*Forget unkind words I have spoken
Remember some good I have done
Forget that I ever had heartache
And remember I've had loads of fun*

*Forget that I've stumbled and blundered
And sometimes fell by the way
Remember I've fought some hard battles
And won, ere the close of the day*

*Then forget to grieve for my going
I would not have you sad for a day
But in summer just gather some flowers
And remember the place where I lay*

*And come in the shade of evening
When the sun paints the sky in the west
Stand for a few moments beside me
And remember only my best*

Jessica has also chosen a poem for today; it is called He Is Gone, by David Harkins.

*You can shed tears that he is gone
Or you can smile because he has lived*

*You can close your eyes and pray that he will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left*

*Your heart can be empty because you can't see him
Or you can be full of love that you shared*

*You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday*

*You can remember him and only that he has gone
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on*

*You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what he would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on*

When Tina bought Crimson Manor Care Home, Paul helped her out with decorating and odd jobs, having been a DIY enthusiast through his life. And when, after his diagnosis with dementia, things started to get too much for him to stay at home, he settled in there happily last year. He got on well with the handyman who took over from him, Jerry, and counted him a good friend. And he enjoyed the many activities at the care home, joining in willingly with a happy smile.

As we leave here to take Paul to his final resting place, to the sound of another of his favourite songs, keep that smile of his in your minds, along with the happy memories you have of Paul and the time you shared.