

# A celebration of life

# Peter Richard Ask

7 August 1946 – 1 October 2020

Tuesday 20 October 2020, Grenoside Crematorium



*a personal goodbye*

Humanist  
*Ceremonies*

Humanists UK is a registered charity no. 285987 and limited company no. 228781 in England and Wales. Humanists UK, 39 Moreland Street, London, EC1V8BB, 020 7324 3060

*Peter was born in Sheffield on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1946, growing up in Wisewood with his dad, Richard, mum, Kathleen, and sisters, Pauline and Julia. Peter's father was a pianist and had a dance band, and Peter inherited his deep love of music, though sadly not quite his talent at the keyboard.*

*He was not the biggest fan of school, or of authority in general, when growing up, though he more than made up for that in later years. What Peter preferred as a lad was to be out with his mates, hiking and rock-climbing some of his favourite pursuits. He wrote of a day out with his friend Peter Freeman:*

*We decided to start up [climbing] on our own, so borrowed my mother's clothes-line and went to Agden Roche, where there were 100 foot climbs. We realised once we'd started that a clothes line, once you have tied it round you both, doesn't go very far, and so we were only climbing in six foot bits, without any protection. A group of proper climbers came along and gave us a proper 'bollocking' so after that we bought some proper gear!*

*Peter became proficient at climbing and orienteering, and was even asked to lead a Youth Association expedition, though after he chose to combine the night's camping with a record 15 pints in the pub, he wasn't asked again! He loved to head off on weekends with his mates, seeing how far they could get by hitch-hiking. Peter actually declared to his mother that his ambition was to be a tramp and travel the country, to which she replied, 'If that's your choice that's up to you, but if you pass some examinations you can still be a tramp but also have other choices if you change your mind.'*

*When he wasn't braving the wilds, Peter spent a lot of his spare time at St Polycarp's Youth Club, mostly playing table tennis, a hobby that he continued right into his twenties. The club had several league teams, and Peter and his friends briefly reached the heady heights of the Guinness Book of Records, for the longest continuous table tennis match.*



*Of course, the youth club didn't just bring Peter ping-pong-related fame; it also brought him the love of his life, Jane. The two of them used to go to folk clubs, where Peter sang and played guitar (a sight better than he played piano!), or Jane would cheer Peter on at the cricket, both at Walkley and at Sun Alliance. By Peter's own admission, they weren't very rock and roll, and when faced with a free evening would often quote, 'Let's have an hour on the rug.' As Peter described, 'This was not some wild pre-planned orgy, but a latch hook rug making kit!'*

Whatever they got up to, Peter and Jane were obviously perfectly suited to one another, and, after Peter's romantic proposal of, 'Do you fancy getting married, or what?' they did just that, on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1972. The newly-weds set off to Scotland for a fortnight's honeymoon, nothing booked, just following their noses, and they had to follow their noses home again a week later when they ran out of money.

Peter had signed up as an articles clerk to become a chartered accountant, but it's fair to say he wasn't really cut out for the job; he spent his study time for his intermediate exams perfecting his rock-climbing skills, so his boss wouldn't even enter him for the final ones! After a couple of years with Cementation Piling, Peter moved to Sheepridge Engineering as an internal auditor, and said he immediately knew it was his kind of place. He got up to all sorts there, including locking various colleagues in cupboards, apparently, but despite that had many friends in the company.



As a married man, though, Peter felt it was time he took his work more seriously, so went to work for the Hepworth Group in Sheffield, again as an internal auditor. His career changed tack when the company put him through night school on a computing course; Peter found he had a real aptitude for it, and went on to not only complete a degree in the subject but achieve first class honours. The day he graduated was one of the proudest moments of his life, not least because his mum, who he felt he had let down in earlier years, was watching on from the audience, seeing her son fulfil the potential she always

knew he had. Peter progressed to computer auditor, then became head of the computer department at a subsidiary company, G R Stein. His job often took him over to the continent, and after he set up his own company, Milden Systems, he travelled extensively, working for the likes of Universal Studios and implementing computer systems for various companies across Europe.

All this meant Peter was working away a lot, but he was a devoted family man, and made the most of time spent at home. He was delighted to become Dad to Jodie and Jaime, and both girls remember many laughs as he got stuck in with games, from Sorry and Newmarket to inventions like the Ask Olympics, which involved sports like croquet, darts and, of course, table tennis, and prizes of chocolate bars wrapped in gold, silver and bronze. Holidays every year were spent in France, often with good friends Linda and Phil, and their children, and Peter would help the kids build dams to stem the tide or play games on the beach. He was still trying even as the girls became teenagers, always in the pool, diving for pennies or challenging them to underwater swimming competitions.



Christmas, too, was a favourite time of year, and especially the Christmas Eve party for family and friends that Peter and Jane would host at Milden Road, with a huge pie and peas supper courtesy of Jane, and musical entertainment courtesy of Peter! By his own admission somewhat the worse for drink, he would 'attempt to play carols on the piano', until a more accomplished or sober player, usually Susan Cuckson, took over. The grand finale, though, would be Peter performing *The Dambusters*, with 'all the right notes, just not necessarily in the right order'! He and Jane were great hosts at their many parties, which often involved the two of them on the karaoke machine at some point, duetting to *I Got You, Babe*.



Peter was always there for his girls as they grew up, someone whose opinion they respected and who would always offer honest advice and practical assistance, as well as the compulsory moments of embarrassing parenting (like when he turned up to settle Jodie into her Halls of Residence sporting a massive fake ponytail, which certainly made an impression on her friends!).

He was incredibly proud to watch Jodie and Jaime receive their degrees and successfully pursue their chosen professions, and likewise very happy to see them start families of their own. Peter got on well with Jodie's husband John, and Jaime's partner Jonathan, and was overjoyed to become a grandad to Jacob, Emma, Harry and Felix. Jodie and John having moved to New Zealand, visits with Jacob and Emma were once yearly affairs, Peter making the absolute most of time with them. Jacob



shared his grandad's interest in computing, and the two of them would spend hours coding or making robots, while Emma treated Grandad like a living doll, and loved to dress him up in all sorts of costumes; and Peter was game for it all. Jaime living somewhat closer to home, Harry and Felix have memories of holidays in Filey with their Grandma and Grandad, or snowy days hurtling down slopes with Peter on a baking tray. Having enjoyed an extensive cricketing career in his younger days, Peter was very pleased to see Harry and Felix take up their bats, and always loved to see them play out the back of the house.





*An opportunity with work allowed Peter and Jane the chance to move to Pamplona in Spain, and subsequently for them to fulfil Peter's dream of living in France. They settled near Carcassonne, enjoying four and a half acres and glorious views, and welcoming family and friends to visit. Peter settled into French life, and revelled in speaking the language accurately but with a broad Yorkshire accent. He and Jane also took the opportunity to travel further, including a trip right round the world that gave them so many special memories; Peter's highlight was a day they spent trekking together in the Cameron Highlands of Malaysia, meeting the locals, exploring rubber plantations and enormous caves, evading scorpions and trying out a hunting blowpipe, all without another tourist in sight.*



*When Peter and Jane made the decision to move back to Yorkshire, they settled at New Hall Farm, and found themselves part of a welcoming community. Together with friends on the courtyard they created a seven hole golf course out back, ideal for Peter who had always been a keen golfer. They also joined a bridge club through the U3A in Stocksbridge, and Peter's interest in that game never waned, even through lockdown.*

*The years since Peter's terminal diagnosis have obviously brought their challenges, but many of you have been inspired by how Peter chose to live the life he had left. He didn't waste the time he had, continuing to pursue interests like genealogy and even writing a novel! Peter's cousin wrote to Jane:*

*'I hope that if or when I am told I have a terminal illness I can face it with the same courage, dignity and humour that Peter showed in his last years. I am sure that his stoical resistance was in some measure due to the unconditional support he received from you and the girls.'*

*And that support was given freely because of the boundless love Peter's family had, and still have, for him. He was a family man, fun, slightly crazy, and totally unique, and he is missed desperately. But all of those memories he leaves with you are a part of him that will never leave you.*