

# A celebration of life David Mcilrevey Francis Murray

14 December 1928 – 09 March 2018

10.00 am, 29 March 2018, Cardiff and Vale Crematorium

*a personal goodbye*

Humanist  
*Ceremonies*

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David was born in Newport on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1928, his father, also David was a Chief Engineer in the Merchant Navy and he had met Kate, David's mother when he trained at the Llandaff Institute. David had two older sisters, Marge and Tina, with whom he was very close, but was always bickering and fighting. David senior was away at sea for eleven months of the year and so his mother was the centre of their lives.

David had a very happy childhood, spending much of his time at a farm at Cats Ash Woods, which was run by friends of his parents who he always called uncle Jack and auntie Ruby. He spent many weekends and all summer there as he grew up before and during the war and told many stories of his childhood.

The farm had no water on tap, so water had to be drawn from the stream and there was no electricity. From an early age David was interested in how things work and was very handy, so he was soon the only one allowed to repair anything at the farm.

He told how Jack often went to Maendy for a drink in a horse and cart returning very drunk much later. He once took a very young David with him and David was amazed that while Jack was comatose in the cart after lots of cider, the horse made its way home, unguided, by the most direct route, crossing fields and

gardens on its way. Jack then had to go and apologise for the damage done by his homing horse.

The family often got rabbits from the farm which was a treat during the years of rationing. But as Jack was not a very good shot he only ever used a 12 bore when hunting, so each mouthful of rabbits came with added buckshot.

During the war David, aged about fourteen or fifteen years old, was an ARP messenger. This meant that he went on patrol with the Air Raid Wardens, and during an air raid he ran as fast as he could about Newport, wearing a white helmet, carrying messages.

It appears that it was a good job the messages were written down because on one occasion he was playing a casualty in an exercise and had only quickly glanced at his briefing card. When asked by the doctor what was wrong with him he replied, "I have an abominable injury.'

David attended St Julian's High School and when he left in 1943 he started technical college as an apprentice draughtsman, employed by the British Aluminium Company.

David's father was the chief engineer on three ships that were sunk by the Germans during the war. The last sinking took place in the final months of the war and left him with severe burns so he returned home to recuperate at Jack and Ruby's farm.

Not far from the farm was a prisoner of war camp where German sailors and submariners were detained, these would often call to see him and pay their respects. David was immensely impressed with this. John described his father to me as a gentleman and perhaps he learnt lots of this from the manners and respect shown by his father and his ex-adversaries.

In his early teens during the war David was a very good amateur boxer but in 1945, while his father was still recuperating, he developed rheumatic fever and was laid up for a year. After that he never boxed again and wasn't deemed fit enough to do National Service. As a result, he continued to work and study undertaking twelve years of full time work and part-time education. During this time, he worked as a Design Engineer for Finley Engineering and one of his jobs was the maintenance and repair of the transporter bridge in Newport. As the bridge was so old no spares existed for many of its parts, so when something broke he would climb up the bridge, measure and draw what had been broken and then get an exact copy of it made before replacing it.

By the time he was fully qualified as a Chartered Engineer and a member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, he was working for ICI in Pontypool eventually becoming the production manager for the site. The fact that he was also a hands-on engineer was apparent when he was called out in the middle of the night to deal with a strike.

He arrived at 3am to find hundreds of workers standing outside the plant and refusing to go back in until his four duty engineers had resolved the problem. He soon discovered that the strike was the result of a critical breakdown to the most important machine in the plant, which was now only producing stone-cold tea.

David borrowed the toolbox of one of his engineers, took his jacket off and repaired the machine. He then held a meeting with his four duty engineers, where he discussed their problem-solving ability. John told me it was unlikely that he would have raised his voice.

David was introduced to June by his sister Tina and her husband Roy. Roy was the manager the Monmouthshire Building Society where Tina worked as a

secretary. They were married 1955 and John was born in 1958. They lived in Ponthir, which was a rural area and a lovely place for John grow up.

I asked John what David was like as a father and he said he was fantastic, very supportive, non-judgemental and had patience beyond belief, never raising his voice. John remembers getting into trouble when he was about six and was taken home by the railway station master for riding his three-wheeled bike across the tracks on a regular basis. David was very apologetic and told John off.

Some weeks later he took John with him to the police station to report a routine matter. When there he asked the desk sergeant had they received any reports of small boys on the railway line. Taking the hint, the Sergeant took John into the cells and warned him of what would happen if he continued in his law-breaking ways.

David loved music and loved to play the drums. Unfortunately, nobody else loved to hear him play the drums. He often used his favourite pair of brushes and maintains that they had adversely affected his ability to play ever since his aunts used them to unblock a sink.

He was always very proud of John's musical ability and was delighted when John joined the Welsh Guards and played in the Guards Band. When John played David would always go to see him and he kept all the leaflets and brochures as mementoes of John's achievements. On one occasion he went to see John when he was part of the Changing of the Guards outside Buckingham Palace. He proudly took photos, using all thirty-six exposures on his film roll. Unfortunately, they were all of the guard standing next to John and none of John.

In 1975 when John joined the Army, David and June moved to Manchester where David became the group engineer of an ICI subsidiary and had

responsibility for seven factories around Manchester. While living in Manchester David and June divorced in 1978.

In 1980 David went to Pakistan and was in charge of the construction of a huge factory in Lahore, that would eventually employ 5000 people. He was halfway through this job when he collapsed with angina in 1981, he returned to the UK and in 1982 he had a quadruple bypass in London. At the time John was with living in London and visited him every day while he recovered. Once he was fit again he worked briefly but then decided to retire.

When John and Susan moved to South Wales in 1985, David decided to move closer to them and relocated to Chepstow, where he enjoyed his retirement and kept very active.

One of his great loves was amateur dramatics and he was a member of the CHAOS - Chepstow Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society. The family regularly went to see him in many roles, but their favourite was that of the genie in Aladdin.

His entrance was meant to be dramatic, an explosion, light and smoke, clearing to magically reveal David in full costume. However, the special effects person was not of West End quality. So, on cue, David was seen sidling through the curtain, a second later the explosion when off, David jumped in surprise and then Ellie stood up on a chair shouted at the top of her voice, "That's my grandpa."

David became the main babysitter for Tom and Ellie and he was a huge part of their's and Ben's childhoods.

They have each written their own memories of their grandpa and asked me to read them.

### Ellie's memories

Not everyone is lucky enough to be able to have such a close relationship with their grandparents but when I look back through my life, the majority of my memories have Gramps in them and all of these are happy!

From the time when he and dad had to tag team to get me into a pair of tights to get me to school as a toddler; to being such an influence on my own children who will continue to sing Tiddly Winky and smile thinking about him!

My favourite memory though which always makes me laugh every time I think about it, is when we discovered happy hour in Tenerife and Gramps slightly over did it on the Triple Brandies! We made it back to the apartment and Gramps took himself to bed only to have the entire place shake when we heard a massive bang. Thomas went to check and found him in the wardrobe, having fallen after having 'a little lean'.

You were the most wonderful Grandpa anyone could wish for and I am so glad to have had you for as long as we did! I love you with all my heart and as you would say after every Sunday roast- 'I only wish everyone was as lucky as us'.

### Tom's memories

Grandpa was one of life's true gentlemen and was an inspiration to me as I'm sure he was to many others!

We've had so many laughs over the years - from landscaping numerous gardens to trips abroad, there are too many to list.

A couple of memories stand out though:

Grandpa, me and dad linked together by arms, jumping simultaneously in an effort to bed in a patio slab

Annual trips to London to see Trooping the Colour – one of the reasons I ended up joining the guards. We'd get the National Express to London, watch the parade and have lunch in Henry's opposite Green Park. We'd then do something in the afternoon. One year, we did a boat trip along the Thames which he slept through after having a beer with his lunch

The time he noticed that his water feature in his garden – a posing lady, had a discoloured breast where the water had been running and so he attempted to paint it. In doing so brought he more attention to it as he couldn't get a colour to match.

All of his projects made it evidently clear that he had lived alone for a number of years. Practicality was always key, aesthetics were not important. We used to joke that we would bury him in a very ugly – but practical TV cabinet he once made.

He was a great man and always lit up any room he entered. He loved all of his great grandkids and they adored him meaning we always spent evenings and weekends together. I'm really glad they got to know him and hold him in such high regard at a young age.

I already miss him dearly but feel very lucky to have such great memories of the last thirty two years with him.

#### Ben's memories

My favourite memory of Grandpa is from a holiday in Tenerife about eighteen years ago. I was five or six and I remember Dad cooking breakfast for all of us in the kitchen area, of the huge apartment that Grandpa used to rent for us all.

Grandpa was fussing Dad about something, probably making a mess, and got on Dad's nerves quickly. Dad decided he had had enough, so he dipped his fingers in the baked beans and before Grandpa had time to react, daubed both the lenses of Grandpa's glasses in tomato sauce, and then gave him a smart tap on the forehead with the wooden spoon from the same saucepan of beans. Grandpa staggered around as if he had been struck by lightning. It was always fun with Grandpa. I will miss him.

When not involved with his family, David was always busy. When living in Chepstow, he applied for a part-time job as the assistant in the metal workshop of a secondary school. He was surprised when he didn't get the job and made some enquiries. He was told, unofficially, that he was more qualified and experienced than any member of the staff and it would have been embarrassing for them to have him as their assistant.

He moved to Penarth in 2000 to be closer to his family and set about making new friends. He became heavily involved with Probus, a charitable organisation of older professional businessmen, and he was its president in 2010. He also joined the Windsor Bowls Club. He had many friends at both, had a busy social life and often went away on many trips with them.

He was immensely proud when Tom followed John and joined the Welsh Guards Band in 2004 and supported him in the way that he had supported John. David and Sue would go up to London every year to see the rehearsals for trooping of the colour.

In the last eighteen months David's health declined with the onset of Alzheimer's. John and he were told that he had the early stages of Alzheimer's at an appointment at the Memory Clinic in Barry Hospital. As they walked out

David turned to John and said, "What did they say I had?" John replied, "I can't remember." and they both cracked up laughing.

He soon moved in with John and Susan and was very happy living there for the last year, although limited in what he could do. He really enjoyed seeing so much of his grandchildren and great grandchildren, who visited often. He enjoyed the regular Sunday lunches and family outings for meals.

His weekly treat was a trip to Ellie's choir rehearsal. Where Susan sang with the choir, John played the piano and Ellie conducted, he sat at the back and watched with great pride, he was well enough to do this up until six weeks ago.

John tells me that anyone who knew him remembers the great joy he got from reciting monologues, his favourite being Sonia Snell, which I will now read to finish this tribute and I will try do him justice.