

# A celebration of the life of

# Dennis Raishbrook

22 April 1931 – 2 December 2022

3pm 27 May 2023, 39 Granville Road, Oxted



*a personal goodbye*

Humanist  
*Ceremonies*

We are all concerned, directly or indirectly, with the death of an individual, because we are all part of one human community, and no one of us is independent or separate. Though some of the links are strong, and some are tenuous, each of us is joined to all the others by kinship, love, friendship, by living in the same neighbourhood or country, or simply by our common humanity.

All that has life has a beginning and an end, and life exists in the time span between birth and death. For those of us who do not have a religious faith, and who believe that death brings the end of individual existence, life's significance lies in the experiences and satisfactions we achieve in that time-span, and its permanence lies in the memories of those who knew us.

And what an incredible long life Dennis lived. Let's think about the world when he was a small boy

It was a different world to the one we know now. Two families rented the same house, the Rides upstairs had an inside toilet and bathroom but no kitchen, the Raishbrooks, downstairs, had a kitchen range in the living room and an outside toilet. There was no electricity, lighting was by gas, and ironing had to be done with a flat iron, heated on the range or gas stove. The radio, always referred to as the wireless, was powered by a wet battery which needed recharging from time to time. Clothes were washed in the copper, people washed in the kitchen sink, and outside the back door were a couple of steps down to the outside and only lavatory which had a wooden thumb-latch door and a six inches gap at top and bottom.

Eventually electricity was installed, and they had an electric iron which had the lead plugged into an adaptor on the ceiling light which would swing around as the ironing was done. Health and Safety wasn't heard of in those days. Until the range was replaced with a boiler, there was no running water and water for washing was only heated on a Friday, bath night.

Ron Rides, Dennis's friend from upstairs, is with us today. Dennis spoke eloquently of him in his memoir:

*"We were on very good terms with the Rides. Ron is only four months older than me and we all went to the same school in Bonneville Road, Clapham. It was a good twenty minutes" walk to the school, but we still came home for dinner (we never called it lunch) at midday. Mum and Aunt Glad took turns in walking the three of us to and fro. I know we came home for dinner because there was nothing provided at the school and on one occasion Ron decided he did not want his rice pudding, so he threw it out of their front window. When we left to go back to school that afternoon the rice pudding was splattered on the pavement for all to see.*

*"Ron's father was a taxi driver and the black cabs in the thirties were open-fronted, so cabbies used to wear leather overcoats to keep warm. When his leather coat was replaced, Ron's Dad used it to make a pair of chaps for Ron to wear when he dressed up as a cowboy. I was very envious but someone made me an Indian costume as a second prize."*

Younger brother Terry was not born until the family had been evacuated to South Molton in Devon, and by the time they returned the Rides had moved out and the Raishbrooks had the whole house. We'll hear from Terry later.

I'll now read you Lynne's words about her Dad:

*These are just a few simple words to sum up my dad and what he meant to me*

*He was always there for me – and I know he always will be*

- *A kind, caring and very loving man*
- *Very fair – but strict when required (and that was quite often with me!)*
- *Understanding – even when I felt no one really understood me – Dad did*
- *Very practical – in his younger years, would turn his hand to anything*
- *He was famous for fixing things and holding things together with little bits of string or rubber bands*
- *Loyal and 100% trustworthy*
- *Respected by everyone who knew him*
- *Supportive – whether he agreed with what I was doing or not, he would always stand by me*
- *A wicked sense of humour*
- *Told some very poor 'dad' jokes*
- *Extremely generous*
- *Always picked me up if I was feeling low*
- *Always saw the best in people – sometimes to his own detriment*
- *He had a passion for puddings – and always had one, even if he couldn't eat his dinner*
- *He made me laugh a lot*
- *Was always smiling and looking positively on everything – despite going through a lot himself*
- *Whenever asked how he was feeling, no matter how unwell he was he would always answer "I'm fine dear"*
- *Often cantankerous*
- *Stubborn*
- *Very fond of a single malt*
- *Very cheeky – every evening would put his empty whisky glass next to the coaster, rather than on it. He knew it annoyed us*
- *A very dignified and gentle man*
- *The best man I think I will ever know*
- *I keep thinking he is off on a cruise or something and one day will just walk back through the door*
- *I am very proud of what he has done – in his life as well as in his death and I am extremely honoured that he is my dad.*
- *As one of mum and dad's closest friends said – "it's a pity Pam and Den couldn't be here today – they would have loved this.*

For Lynne, the words of the Robert Louis Stevenson poem, *That Man is a Success*, sum Dennis up:

*That man is a success  
Who has lived well, laughed often and loved much;  
Who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of children;  
Who has filled his niche and accomplished his task;  
Who leaves the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy or a perfect poem or a rescued soul;  
Who never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it;  
Who looked for the best in others and gave the best he had.*

Terry cannot be with us today, so Neil will read his words:

*I was so pleased when Lynne asked me if I would like to say a few words on this occasion. Sadly I am not able to do so in person because my youngest grandson, Harry, is getting married this afternoon.*

*As most of you will know, Dennis was my older brother. I was ten years his junior so I can't really say that we grew up together. By the time I was old enough to enjoy his company, Dennis had completed National Service, was commuting to work in the city and in no time at all was preparing to leave the then family home in Balham.*

*It has been said that I was a mistake. I couldn't possibly comment!*

*We both attended the same school but at very different times. Dennis was educated in the run up to and during the second world war which could not have been easy. But typically he made it work and in doing so developed a long association with the Old Boys of the school, initially playing rugby until well into his fifties and finally becoming a founder member of the organising Committee, a position that he held up to and through the recent pandemic.*

*When I left school I had no idea what I might do for a living. At that time Dennis was studying for an accounting qualification and it was he who suggested that an accountancy background could be of benefit to me whichever career path I chose to go down.*

*But it didn't stop there. Having taken my brother's advice, he then, through a mutual friend, was instrumental in getting me my first serious job for which I was extremely grateful.*

*Dennis was a warm hearted and generous man with a devoted family. His lively sense of humour will stay with me for years to come. I am proud to have been his brother.*

Thank you, Neil.

Grandson Tom will now speak to us:

*Goodbye, Granddad. I hope that wherever you are, you know how much I love you.*

*Without you, the world is a little dimmer.*

*I will always carry your memory with me wherever I go.*

*Your love and your kindness will never be forgotten. I will always cherish the times we spent together.*

*I wish I could have one more chance to tell you goodbye in person, but I know that wherever you are, you can hear my goodbye from here.*

*Goodbye Granddad - your smile and your laughter are something I will never forget."*

Sara will now talk to us:

*When I think of my granddad, he is sitting, happily, with a glass of wine or a whiskey in his hand, just watching what's going on. Usually, the chaos of his great grandchildren running around, or my mum cooking something, or in the later days, just watching sport on TV. I'm sure he's doing the same today, watching us.*

*My granddad was one of the most intelligent people I've ever known. If I was struggling with homework, the answer would be...give Granddad a call, he will know. And he usually did. We were all so very proud seeing him on Countdown. I think his highlight was meeting Carol Vorderman and Susie Dent! Those pictures were proudly on the wall in the living room and the teapot on the windowsill. Everybody else's highlight was him spelling CRAPPER which still gets mentioned in news articles today.*

*I hadn't realised just how much of our family life revolved around food. There are so many happy memories of barbeques in the summer with everyone on the patio, granddad outside cooking, having rigged up a tarpaulin to keep the rain off. Nanny would have made the curried potatoes that Izzy now loves, and enough salads and side dishes to feed the whole road. On hot days, granddad would have got the paddling pool out for Tom and I to play in. I remember he once pitched his RAF tent in the middle of the lawn for us to play in. It had been kept meticulously clean and put away so carefully as that's what granddad did. When I find myself tying a little piece of string around something, or a rubber band on the tongs, I know where it comes from!*

*Tom and I loved a Sunday lunch at Farm Drive. We'd arrive and Granddad would let us have a proper coke from his bar in the living room. In later years, that would turn into a G&T for me, and a whisky for Jeff! There were snacks on the table and a sherry for nanny as she cooked. As a little girl I would perch next to him at the kitchen island as he sliced the meat and he'd give me little bits to taste as he carved. I loved sitting at the dining table, 7 or 8 vegetables, multiple puddings that granddad always enjoyed. After dinner, Granddad would often take Tom and I over to the lake with our fishing nets. He taught us how to catch the little fish and we would put them in his yellow bucket. He'd carry it around for us as we played, then when it was time to go, he'd put the fish back.*

*Granddad was very much the handy man - he would turn his hand to anything and he was always our go to person. He helped Dad build a patio, he'd help mum build a shed base, he could put tiles up, he was a whizz at wallpapering and he would fix any broken toys. When I was 16, I went on holiday for 2 weeks to stay with my pen friend. When I returned, he had decorated my bedroom for me. Beautiful wallpaper, ceiling rose painted. I loved that room.*

*When I bought a garden storage unit, Dad came over to help me put it together. We got stuck, so called someone else to help us. They couldn't do it. So we called Granddad. Granddad couldn't do it. It was at that point, we took it back to the shop and told them it was faulty. If Granddad couldn't do it, it must have been broken.*

*For someone of his generation, he was always ahead of his time. He was the first person I knew to have a car phone. This involved a large heavy briefcase that he kept in the boot of the car, and when needed, there was a phone, long cord and battery that he could put together. I think he was the only person in his office to take the car phone and I don't know if he ever used it! Granddad also had the large stereo system - the big one, with a double tape deck, CD player and turntable. For his 60th birthday, he bought a New Kids on the Block CD so there would be music I would like. He was always thinking of others.*

*Over the last 10 years, Nanny and Granddad became Great grandparents as Jeff and I had our 3 girls. When I went back to work the first time after having Isabella, I worked out a deal so I could finish early on a Friday. I'd collect her from nursery after lunch and we would walk over to see Nanny and Granddad. We would have tea and biscuits and Izzy would play in the living room, or run around the garden. I'm so glad we had those afternoons together and have some lovely photos to look back on. As Izzy grew up, so did her interests and she and granddad would play Chess and she learnt to play the Guitar. When I was little, Uncle Mark's Guitar was not to be touched. As Izzy progressed and became a very good guitar player, she was allowed to use Mark's guitar to play for granddad. He loved to see videos of her school performances. He was so proud of her and everything she has achieved.*

*When we had Alexandra, Granddad was chuffed as they shared a birthday! Lexi had a lovely bond with her birthday buddy. She loved to visit him, throw all the cushions on the floor to play The Floor is Lava, or do some sort of gymnastics show for him. She also loved to eat all of his biscuits. She loved for him to read to her and we have some great photos of them snuggled up together on the sofa with a book.*

*Granddad's 90th birthday fell on Lexi's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Granddad and Jeff shared a love of whisky so Jeff spent a lot of time picking out a special bottle for him. They then spent the afternoon, sitting around the garden table, eating, chatting and drinking the entire bottle of whisky between them. There are not many people that can out drink my husband! But Granddad, aged 90 could!*

*Emilia was a big surprise, and I remember calling Granddad who was in Portugal with Mark and Celeste. They didn't believe me either when I told them our news. I am so glad he got to meet all 3 of our girls and we have so many pictures of them together. Our last outing together was to Chartwell last October. It was all a bit manic. Granddad was in the wheelchair, so he was bussed up to the main house, with Mum and Izzy, while Lexi and I walked up with Emmy in the buggy. I toured the house with the children, while Mum and Granddad got a special virtual tour downstairs. Then it was back in the bus for them and for me, a walk back down the hill to meet the. We sat in the tearoom, with large slices and cake and cups of tea and that memory is one I will never forget. It's one of my favourite pictures of me, Granddad and my girls. We will miss him immeasurably but I am so thankful for all the time we had together.*

Neil will now talk to us about Dennis:

*We are fortunate that Dad took the time to write his memoirs, which cover the period from his first recollection at the age of 15 months, up until 2018 when he said that he and Pam could look back over (their then) 63 years of marriage and “be pleased with their lives”.*

*The memoir is some 40 pages long and as well as providing a wealth of personal detail, it provides a fascinating insight into his early years.*

- *Dad was born on 22nd April 1931.*
- *When the second world war broke out on 1st September 1939, he was just 8 years old and on a train being evacuated to South Molton in Devon, along with his younger brother Dave and their friend Ron Rides. Ron lived with his family renting the upstairs above dad’s family home at 26 Dinsmore Road in Balham. It was a point dad often made, that Ron and Dave went off together to stay at Granny Harris’ in South Molton, while he went on his own to stay with his mum’s sister Aunt Arch, as dad’s mum felt it would be unfair on Ron, for Ron to be on his own.*
- *While he was in South Molton, dad’s father Fred was conscripted into the army, initially joining the Royal Artillery Regiment, until it was discovered that he was a skilled butcher, at which point he was transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps.*
- *Dad’s mum didn’t stay with them initially in South Molton, but joined them some two years later towards the end of 1941, when she was pregnant with Dad’s youngest brother, Terry.*
- *A few months later in February 1942, after 2 and a half years in South Molton, they returned to Balham, even though there were still occasional bombing raids at night.*
- *In September 1942, aged 11, he joined Bec Grammar School - thoroughly enjoying his time there.*
- *In June 1944, aged 13, the V1 doodlebug raids began and in September that year, the V2 raids began.*
- *To avoid the doodlebug raids, dad and his family went to Aldershot, to stay with one of dad’s mum’s friends, but they returned home not long after a doodlebug exploded one night just 100 yards away, causing extensive damage to the house they were staying in.*
- *Dad left school at the end of the fifth year aged just 16 and worked for an insurance company for the next 2 years, where he said that one of the things he learned, was how to look busy.*
- *On 25th October 1949, aged 18, he was called up for National Service in the RAF, spending time at RAF Padgate in Lancashire, RAF Bawdsey on the Suffolk coast and finally at RAF Sandwich, where he met Pam.*
- *His National Service finished two years later in October 1951, when he was 20.*

*Reading his memoir now, there is no doubt in my mind that the seismic and traumatic events of his formative years, must have had a significant impact on the kind of man he became.*

**MEMORIES** *One of my earliest memories of dad, is from the time when we lived in Lindfield Road in Addiscombe. Dad had driven back from the rugby club in an overly intoxicated state and mum, fearing that he might throw up indoors, made him go and sit on a chair in the back garden. Dad would have us believe that there were no drink drive laws back then – and actually, he may have been correct, as I've only just recently discovered that the first maximum legal blood alcohol limit in the UK, wasn't introduced until 1967.*

*Another memory I have of dad, is of how he encouraged us to stand up for ourselves; something that he did for himself and for his younger brother Dave on at least one occasion. I remember him telling me that if I was picked on by a larger boy, the best thing to do was punch them in the solar plexus, which would render them breathless and immobile, without inflicting any obvious damage that you could get into trouble for. In my first year at Trinity, I remember being picked on next to our lockers outside our form room, by Cattermole in the year above. Unable to avoid confrontation and remembering dad's advice, I punched him as hard as I could in what I thought was his solar plexus, and would you believe it, it had the desired effect and Cattermole fell breathless to the floor. What my dad hadn't told me, however, was that this effect was only temporary, and within seconds Cattermole was up and chasing me around the school!*

**SPORT** *Dad loved his sport, both watching it and playing it. He particularly enjoyed playing rugby, and also snooker and bowls, and I recall he also used to play badminton with mum at All Saints Church Hall in Farm Drive. I remember I once played a game of rugby with dad for Bec Old Boys, probably on an occasion when I was home from university, so I would have been in my early 20s and he would have been in his late 40s – he certainly carried on playing well into his 50s. All I can remember of that game, is that I played inside centre to his fly half, and I think the only pass I received from him in the entire game was a hospital pass that saw me get completely smashed into the ground by my older and fatter opposite number! Needless to say, that was the only time we played together!*

*We used to play snooker together quite regularly from the mid-1970s at Keston Men's Club, where dad was a member along with some of his other Farm Drive mates, and where Mark and I, although we don't play very often, are still members. Dad and I were quite evenly matched, but certainly in the early years playing together, dad would beat me more often than I would beat him. It was my claim to fame that my highest ever break was better than his, probably somewhere in the high 30s, until one occasion when we played together when he potted a red that I'd obligingly left over the pocket and the white ball then rolled beautifully into position for him to pot the pink into the middle pocket, and then it helpfully rolled into position again behind the next red which he potted, and finished straight on the next pink which he potted, and this went on and on, and before you knew it, when he eventually missed a ball, he'd compiled a break of 73! Something that he never got close to again and some 30 points higher than I've ever managed.*



**FARM DRIVE** I have particularly fond and happy memories of my childhood growing up at Farm Drive. Remembering the wonderful Sunday lunches Mum used to lay on in the dining room, where dad first earned his nickname of "Porky", because of his exceptional ability to keep going back for more; and the marvellous barbecues mum and dad would put on in the back garden, where on one occasion, perhaps not being sufficiently cognisant of the wind direction viz a vis the positioning of the barbeque, dad managed to accidentally set himself on fire. I think Les helped put out the flames.

Christmas at Farm Drive was always an occasion to enjoy. A time for friends and family, fine food and drink and plenty of entertainment. One year, one of us, probably either me or Mark, were given a present of a cassette recorder. This gave dad the idea to write a radio play, including all the relevant sound effects, and with parts to play for each of us. There was a scene where somebody was walking down a long gravel drive towards the front door of a house, with the sound effect being achieved by stabbing a dart into a bowl full of crisps. The person then knocked on the front door which then creaked open, only in our version the creak came before the knock! It was thoroughly entertaining family fun dreamt up by dad.

**LATTERLY**, when he was living on his own, I'd go round to dad's house to cook and share an evening meal with him. I'd let myself in with the key I had and shout out "alright there, Den boy", a nick-name his mother used to use with him. After we'd eaten at his kitchen table, we'd often get the cards out and have a game of crib. He got more forgetful in his later years and would often forget the form of play, often opening his box before he'd scored his own hand. But then he'd surprise me by correctly shouting out with a triumphant smile "one for his knob!" or "two for his heels!".

Dennis lived a full, fulfilling and happy life and was well-liked and respected by all who knew him. He was conscientious, kind and caring and could be relied upon to help out whenever he was asked, with no job being too big or too small for him. He always brought a positive, can-do attitude to everything he did.

Plenty of times he offered me wise counsel, always constructive, often built on the simple expression, "what's the worst that can happen?" and normally accompanied by some appropriate anecdote from his past.

He would no doubt be touched to see so many friends and family here today to remember him, and would have thoroughly enjoyed it if he could be here with us.

There's no doubt in my mind that the world today would be a better place if there were more people like Dennis in it.

**FINALLY**, I'd like to read the first verse of a poem that from time to time, dad would spontaneously recount when he was round at Lynne's of an evening, most likely with a glass of whisky in his hand. I can only imagine it was something perhaps that he learned by rote at school.

***Vitai Lampada, by Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938)***

*There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night --  
Ten to make and the match to win --  
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,  
An hour to play and the last man in.  
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,  
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,  
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote --  
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'*

And now, with a poem of his own, here's Mark.

*What more can be said about Dennis, my dad?  
He was a wonderful father, the best you could have  
I seldom was thrashed or treated unfair  
Except for the time when Lynne stole the éclair  
When he woke every morning, he would make us all tea  
Which I'd hear him prepare with great dexterity  
A tinkling of spoons, a clinking of cups  
A swishing of water which was oft followed up  
By a softly hummed tune as the tea leaves were binned  
Then a quick "Pardon me" as he loudly broke wind*

*Dad took us to France, Sardinia and Spain  
Where Neil ruined the soup, but Dad didn't complain  
And in Soulac-sur-Mer, Neil got secretly drunk  
Then threw up for hours and was in quite a funk  
Dad stayed up all night consoling my sibling  
Never once criticising or putting the boot in  
But a wine-tasting tour Dad had booked the next day  
Taught my hungover brother a lesson, I'd say*

*An accountant by trade, Dad started low down  
Earning eight pounds a week at a place up in town  
He was then hired by Durst, in Epsom, I think  
An Italian firm that made coloured ink  
His boss was a yank, a bounder named Bunny  
Who fancied the ladies and was tight with his money  
And refused to give Den a bonus he owed  
So dad hired a lawyer who lived down our road  
David Stephens, QC, impeccably posh,  
Impressed Bunny so much that he gave Dad his dosh*

*He then co-owned a garage, but that didn't last long  
His partner was lazy and the timing was wrong  
For this was the summer of '73  
And things were afoot in the oil industry  
The price of a barrel doubled not once but twice  
And the garage in Chigwell went bust in a trice  
So to Croydon he went, to Williams & Glyn  
A factoring firm where he really fit in  
But the directors were bent and were cooking the books  
Holland and Lester, two white-collared crooks  
The police took an interest and both men were tried  
At Preston Crown Court – and guess who testified?  
When Dennis retired, aged 62  
We thought he'd be bored and have nothing to do  
But our fears were unfounded, and one thing's for sure  
He found more stuff to do than ever before*

*His appearance on Countdown shall not be forgot  
Retired accountant Dennis won two games on the trot  
And trot, I believe, is a term that's quite apt  
As one of his words was the rather rude "crapped"  
"I'm not very happy with it," Dennis announced  
"I have the same word!" Terry Wogan pronounced  
Richard Whitely was shocked, Carol Vorderman stunned  
The word was allowed, but the damage was done  
And thus came to an end another fine caper  
And the very next day it was in all the papers*

*Dad was a multi-talented bloke  
He told wonderful stories and really poor jokes  
He dabbled in oils, he sketched in a pad  
He made his own wine and it wasn't that bad  
He could sing like Sinatra and dance like Astaire  
He could magic a coin right out of thin air  
His most unique talent was playing the bones  
Which would drive my mum mad when he played them at home  
He was skilled in the art of do-it-yourself  
He could tile a bathroom or put up a shelf  
And when I was seven he laid the first stone  
Of our back garden patio, which he built on his own  
But his passion for other things proved that much greater  
And he laid the last stone seven years later*

*Dennis loved to play rugby, snooker and bowls  
And excelled at all three, even when he got old  
He enjoyed cribbage and bridge, crosswords and chess  
At which he beat me more often than I'd care to confess  
But in the last game we played back in September  
He mixed up his pieces and could not quite remember  
If black should take white or black should take black  
So we called it a draw and left it at that*

*When I think of my dad, random thoughts come to mind  
Turkish delight, a glass of red wine  
Flapjack and biscuits, Captain Picard  
Cans of pale ale, the smell of cigars  
A flat cap, a Wolseley, an old chest of drawers  
Kebabs by the sea and tales from the war  
Dictionaries, road maps, gadgets and tools  
Drives in the country, lifts home from school  
Sausages, mustard, pickles and bread  
Three pubs and whistle, a poke in the head  
Tia Maria, cream on a spoon  
A handshake, a phone call, a story, a tune  
And there I shall stop for that is the end  
Of this rhyme about Dennis, my dad and best friend*

Thank all of you so much for sharing those memories

I said earlier we were going to remember Pam too. So we'll begin this section by listening to *Bye Bye Blues*, by Bert Kaempfert, the first record they ever bought together. As you listen, I'm sure you'll remember both Dennis and Pam, in your own way or in terms of your own beliefs.

During his National Service Dennis was posted to Sandwich. It was while he was there that the cold war caused the length of national service to be increased from eighteen months to two years, which turned out to be a good thing, because in those last few months he met Pam.

After Dennis left the RAF they wrote to each other regularly. By the middle of 1952 their relationship had reached the stage where their respective parents first met each other. In the summer of 1953 Dennis proposed, and they had a week's holiday in Jersey (showing Pam's mother and father the booking confirmation to prove that they had booked two rooms.) They married in March 1955. In those days it was common practice to get married just before the end of the fiscal year, 5 April, because the change in marital status applied to the whole of that tax year and resulted in a refund of tax. Dennis bought Pam a second-hand ruby and diamonds engagement ring. Because it was not new it was not subject to purchase tax and in theory was better value for money. He'd learned a lot from working in finance!

Over the years, as you've heard, they provided a loving and stable background for their three children, and later for their growing families. They loved entertaining. The children remember sitting at the top of the stairs, quietly listening to the adults talking at frequent dinner parties. And they took full advantage of their long retirement. They went on cruises and were members of the National Trust.

Their ruby wedding anniversary was in 1995 and to celebrate the occasion (with the help of hypnotherapy and a cocktail of drugs to overcome Pam's fear of flying), they went on a four-week tour of Australia and New Zealand.

One thing however Pam refused to do was join the bowls club because she said she wouldn't wear tights in the summer, and that was a requirement. She did however explore a number of other pastimes, including basket weaving, and collecting first day covers, and teaspoons. She was an excellent cook and very proud of her entire bound collection of the Cordon Bleu Cookery Course. She was a superb knitter and a very good seamstress, and made all her children and grandchildren's school jumpers and cardigans.

Pam and Den were a great team and it's hard to celebrate one without the other. Pam died in April 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic and as a result only a handful of people were able to attend her funeral – another reason for celebrating her as well today.

Dennis ended his memoir: "I have entitled this diatribe "Memories" but it is now up-to-date and in danger of becoming a diary. Looking back over my life has made me aware of things I did not fully appreciate: the despair my mother and father must have experienced when they left Dave and me behind and went back to London and the blitz: the benefit of having helpful and sociable neighbours and, finally, how lucky I was to meet Pam and have such a wonderful family. Now that Pam and I are in our mid-eighties life has slowed down considerably. We can please ourselves what we do and when we might or not do it. Looking back over the sixty-three years of our marriage we can be pleased with our lives. Starting from the dry rot riddled basement of a Victorian house we have raised a wonderful family who have each done far better than we could have hoped. We are immensely proud of them."

Although Dennis had been ill for some time, his actual death was unexpected. He told Lynne he wasn't feeling well on the Saturday night, and in less than a week, he died, with Lynne at his side.