

A celebration of the life of  
**Raymond (Ray) John Kite**

3<sup>rd</sup> June 1943 – 30<sup>th</sup> December 2023

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024, Guildford Crematorium

Celebrant: Felicity Harvest



*a personal goodbye*

**Humanist**  
*Ceremonies*

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Ray's life was described by Doreen as "a game of two halves". But the unusual thing about this game was that the second half began before the first half was finished. Complicated, intriguing, and unusual. But the greatest part of the story is that, at the end of the game, both teams, both families, felt they had won a real prize through being close to Ray, and they in turn have become close to each other.

Let's make it all clear.

Ray was born in Oxfordshire, on the 3rd of June 1943, while Mum Kath was evacuated. They rejoined Dad, Joseph, a draughtsman, at home in Kidbrooke when it was safe to do so, and six years later, in calmer times, Jeff was born. They went to Kidbrooke Green Juniors and then Eltham Green Comprehensive.

Both Ray and Jeff were passionate about cars, and racing.

Jeff remembers listening to the 1955 24 hour Le Mans race on an old floor-standing wooden radio with Ray, when they were five and eleven. Jaguar won the race and that was the moment when Ray's love for Jaguar cars was cemented into his DNA. Over the years he collected many model cars, pictures, and magazines, the majority being about the Jaguar brand. And not just models! He also owned at least 3 used Jags at various times in his life.

Ray was a great elder brother. The same year as that Le Mans race, Jeff recalls, with gratitude, returning home from a two week convalescence stay in Broadstairs to find Ray had made him a model farm to play with.

The brothers' first experience of attending a motor race was in 1962, before Ray had a car, so getting there and back was a challenge. They had to get two buses from Kidbrooke and Eltham then walk the last two miles to Brands Hatch.

Much later, the brothers bought a Formula Ford single seater. Jeff and Doreen were living in Croydon at the time. The garage where they kept the car was a couple of hundred meters away.

Ray couldn't reach the pedals, so with the help of their friend Mike, they decided to make a bespoke seat for him. To make the seat, Ray had to sit in the car, in his perfect driving position. A black plastic bag was placed behind him and filled with expanding foam. Well!! It did expand, so much so that the warm expanded foam shot out of the black bag, temporary blinding Jeff. Mike and Jeff rushed back to the flat to try to clear his eyes. This took some time; eye cleaning efforts were paused on hearing a gentle knock at the door. On opening the door, they were faced with a hunchbacked Ray, who'd managed to get out of the car, with the bespoke seat stuck to his back. He looked like a tortoise. They couldn't stop laughing.

The seat worked though, and Ray did actually compete in eleven races, holding a competition licence for seven years.

Going back a few years, though, Ray started work at sixteen for Trafalgar Engineering based in Rotherhithe, the company owned by his Dad's cousin. He went on to work for Peak Freans, the biscuit company, then took his administration skills to a couple of car rental companies. We'll come back to them later.

During the 1970s and 80s Ray spent many holidays in the USA visiting relations and friends. He also visited Canada and Alaska as well as a few European countries. He took many photos and bought piles of postcards. One of Ray's highlights in the States was visiting Las Vegas to drive a Nascar. This was something he was very proud of, and of course his family and friends heard all about it!

Meanwhile nephew and niece Steve and Joanna were born. Ray was so proud of them, and spent time with them from the day they were born. He was always happy to join in and help out, with outings and events. And the obsession with being on four wheels moved on through the generations, as Steve took up karting. Ray travelled with the family around the circuits in the UK and he continued to support Steve as he moved up to racing cars.

Over the years Ray moved to Kessingland in Suffolk, then to Thetford in Norfolk, eventually returning to the family home in Kidbrooke. He stayed there till Kath died, then moved to his final home in Capel, where he was very happy. Somehow, into a mobile home – and a shed – he managed to fit all those souvenirs of his travels, the model cars, the magazines, the many, many collections. In this respect, he did NOT follow the Jaguar ethos of “focusing on what’s important, getting rid of unnecessary fluff/clutter/decoration”

A kind soul, Ray would always take an interest if any one of the wider family was ill, or taking a new job, or going on holiday, seeking an update, generally on a daily basis. He loved to phone people and chat – Jeff is still getting used to the fact that his mobile doesn’t ring several times a day.

Football was always important to Ray. His early allegiance was to Wolves, then it passed to Liverpool. He even came to Crystal Palace with Jeff and Doreen a few times. He took an interest in Millwall, too, because his Dad Joseph had been born in Millwall and followed the team all his life.

He cycled, he rode horses from time to time, he ran, and he claimed to excel in everything he did.

So hold that picture in your heads, for a minute. Ray, deeply involved in supporting his family and friends, living in his mobile home in Capel surrounded by piles of model cars, magazines, postcards, maps and other memorabilia. A happy and fulfilled man.

And now the other part of the story.

Twenty-five years ago Ray was working for Imperial Car Rentals when he first met Becky who worked for the same company. She was 17 and had recently sold her car to finance her travels to Australia with her best friend Kelly, so she was commuting by train from home to Croydon. Ray kindly offered to collect her from the station on his way in. This is where their friendship first began. He was always dependable and prepared to be the chauffer as a safe way to travel. As a 17-year-old, who was she to complain? Ray then began to pick her up from home instead of from the station, and Ray met her parents, and her brothers. The lifts then extended to collecting her and her friends from clubs - he really became the friend to all and an angel in disguise. If they were ever in a pickle Ray would be there, whatever time day or night.

Becky then met her husband, Ben. They went onto have two children, Jack and Jessica. From day one, Ray was present in both their lives becoming a solid grandfather figure to each of them. Ray loved life and say no to nothing, he was fully of energy and played with Jack and Jessica and all their school friends for hours. He was even known as Ray ‘DeHaya’ as he stood in goal for hours whilst they all practiced their shots, turning up in his beloved Red Lamborghini – Hyundai that is!

They shared many memories, from his encouragement of their football journeys. He was there for every game, more or less every weekend, not to mention soft plays, funfairs, holidays around the world, or travelling to Europe to watch Jack and Jess play hockey - you name it. The list is endless.

His willingness to give lifts continued down the generations too. In recent years, the key turning in the door at 2.30am was not Becky, but Jessica and Ray – Jess had called Ray to collect her because she had changed her mind about staying out at a sleepover

Here are Jess's memories of Ray:

*Ray, the most talkative but most kind-hearted person I know. Ray did everything for me, and always put others above himself no matter what. Ray means so much to me and I will continue to make him proud whilst he's watching over me. Every time I step on that football pitch I'm playing for Ray. He came to all my games and was my biggest supporter through low times and the best times.*

*He did everything for me, he took me to so many places and we made the best memories that I will cherish in my life forever. Ray falling asleep every time he picked me up from school, taking me on late night trips to Sainsburys. Ray writing match reports for my football games, are just so little of the memories I made.*

*Ray means so much to me that it feels like a part of my heart has been taken away, but then put back because of all the amazing memories I've made with him. He was the best grandpa I could have ever asked for, and always put a smile on anyone's face. Although he did not stop talking, I'm sure we can all agree we miss it now.*

*There's never going to be a goodbye for us, Ray, because wherever you are, you will always be in my heart. I know you're always going to be shining down on me like the "Ray" of sunshine you were. I'm always going to hold on to our memories together forever, and I always love you, Ray, more than you or anyone could think.*

And Becky would like me to say, on her behalf:

*"Ray has been a father figure and support to me since my dad passed away 10 years ago and before that. He's always been there for me, my family and my children, he really has been an angel to me and I hope he will continue to be watching over us. Thank you for being so generous, kind, and consistent"*

For the Kite family Christmas day, 2022 was a sad one, as their friend Christine, my cousin, who usually joined them at Janet's, had died only a few days before. So Christmas 2023 was about getting back on their feet and finding a way to enjoy the holiday again. Sadly, though, they were about to suffer another loss. They did not realise that their goodbyes to Ray on 27<sup>th</sup> December, when he left Bognor, was to be their final farewell. When Becky took Ray a meal and some shopping round on the 30<sup>th</sup>, she found him dead. A terrible shock for her, and for everyone.

But there has been one good outcome. Over the last 25 years, the Kite family have been aware of Ray's friendship with Becky and her family, and he talked warmly to them about what they did together. And Becky and Ben and the kids have been equally aware of how much Ray loved Jeff, Doreen, the kids and their circle of friends. The opportunity has now been presented for both families to continue to share their love and admiration for Ray together, but also in a new form of friendship. They absolutely agree on what a devoted and caring presence Ray was in their lives, and laugh at the memories of his endless talking, his assumption that he would be the best at everything he tried, and his obsessive hoarding – no, sorry, collecting.

So when the big black & white flag came down for Ray, there could be no doubt that he'd been in poll position twice over, and that he'd come in in first place, and first place, at the end of the race.

