

EULOGY

How do you summarise 78 years of living in 10 minutes? How do you describe a character like Colin in just a few sentences? This is not an easy task but we are here today to honour this man and it falls to me to try and sum up the story of the life of this man in this tribute.

He was born on May 31st 1939. His mother Lydia was French and had spent most of her young life in a comfortable colonial existence in Egypt where she had met his father Arthur who was in the RAF. Somehow Arthur persuaded her to marry him and move to a new life in austere England with its damp climate. Colin was born in a military hospital in Aldershot- the home of the British army. He was 2 months premature. This was at the time when there were no incubators so this was serious and life threatening -They just had to hope that he would survive.

His mother wanted to call him Jean Pierre, but with war approaching, a foreign French name was deemed inappropriate by his father so he was named Colin. He had an older brother Ralph and 5 years later a younger sister was born named Anne-Marie. He devoted a lot of his life to being a pesky older brother to her and teasing her but of course like most brothers he was fiercely protective of her and I saw him get very angry if someone else upset her.

He spent his early years in Portsmouth (home of the British Navy) and grew up by the sea. I think this is why he came to love the sea and why he always had an interest in boats and ships. He went to junior school in Portsmouth and then Grammar school. He always told us he had to work hard at school but we found the school reports which gave us a more accurate picture of this boy Colin. Remember that these reports were written during a time when teachers could simply write what they thought. There was no political correctness, no delicate wording.

Extracts from Grammar school reports as follows

1953 – aged 13 Chemistry teacher says “His constant chatter often prevents concentration by himself and others” Form master says “A boy who needs constant watching. Later in the year the Biology

EULOGY

teacher commented “He has improved a little and exam results are better. But he is a chronic gossip!”

Finally aged 16 he did manage to get some reasonable results.

He left school and although his mother was rather hoping he would get a job in the local department store, he found work as a Lorry Driver's Mate. This involved doing all the heavy work, shifting the load on and off the lorry and generally being the dogsbody for the lorry driver. But he was earning a very good wage and he enjoyed the freedom of riding around in a big lorry all day. Life seemed good.

However, his father had other ideas. Having trained in the 3rd entry at RAF Halton and served in the Royal Air Force, and having sent Colin's older brother off to the Royal Air Force, it seemed a logical conclusion that this young man could also benefit from the discipline and training in the same environment.

He was duly enrolled into RAF Halton 83rd entry - this was the training college for the Royal Air Force engineers. I believe there are three men sitting here with us today who were also in that 83rd entry. Suddenly Colin was reduced to earning 10 shillings a week and living in a hard and punishing regime. Only a very small number of the Apprentices as they were called, completed the gruelling 3 yr course and qualified.

But he did survive and after qualifying as an engineer, Colin remained with the Royal Air Force for 14 years. He was sent to Aden, Germany, Malta and many other places. In England, he spent time at RAF bases in East Anglia and in Cornwall which I think he enjoyed. He worked on Lightnings, Javelins, Canberras and Shackletons. He probably felt most closely linked with the Shackleton. Just a few years ago, while driving along the motorway in Cape Town, we saw a Shackleton flying over us as it departed Cape Town Airport. This was the only Shackleton in the world which was still flying and it was quite an emotional experience for Colin to witness this plane in the sky again.

EULOGY

His time at Halton and in the RAF had a great influence on his character. He learned to value integrity and loyalty amongst his colleagues. Your life, could quite literally, depend on your friends. Apart from being a good engineer, he also learned how to polish shoes and how to press a shirt and trousers and he was truly brilliant at packing a suitcase. In the RAF he took up boxing and when I asked why, he said it was because you got better food. Those representing the RAF at sport were given fresh eggs instead of powdered eggs and better meat. As a left hander his "South Paw" technique was considered useful. His boxing career was fairly short though and when asked why he had given up his response was, "they kept hitting me".

He got married and in 1962, while stationed in Germany, a first baby was due and his wife Marilyn went into labour a little early. He persuaded someone to drive them to the hospital but the baby started to arrive on the journey. So at the age of 23, he delivered the baby in the car and feared the worst because the baby looked blue and did not seem to be breathing. Luckily, that baby survived and she was named Deborah. A year and a half later, a son Brent was born and this time they made it to the hospital with about 45 mins to spare. Deborah is married with two children (and a grandchild) and lives in England and Brent now lives with his partner Deb in Canada.

After 14 years, Colin decided he had enough of life in the services. With his engineering background a friend lured him into the corporate world and in 1969 he was offered a job with the oil company Texaco. He was offered a decent salary and a company car and good prospects.

The 70's and early 80's were the good years to be in the oil industry. He worked his way up through the company and eventually became the Industrial Sales Manager for the UK. Sadly his marriage did not survive and he was divorced and started a new chapter in his life.

He met me when I was a sweet young thing also working in London and although he always rather liked to describe himself as "quite a catch" the truth is that I had to run just slow enough for him to catch me. We eventually got together and we were married in London in 1985. I was told "a 2nd marriage is the triumph of hope over

EULOGY

experience” I was also told “well this won’t last” – probably because of the 19 year age gap -- but we were married for almost 32 years. His first grandchild Richard was born in 1986 and a grand-daughter Sarah was born in 1989. A great grand-daughter, Sienna, was born in December last year.

We lived in Knightsbridge, Chelsea and Kensington and enjoyed life in London. As well as exploring London, we both enjoyed holidays travelling through the Far East and also seeing Europe. We moved to Barnes in South West London in 1991. During this time, Colin served voluntarily on the London Committee of the Sail Training Association which is a charity which raises funds to enable young people to enjoy the adventure of sailing a tall ship. He had himself enjoyed two voyages on such tall ships – one around the Scottish isles and another visiting the Channel Islands and he loved the adventure of sailing these wonderful ships. He was involved in organising many fund raising events for this charity and it was a special honour when Harry was born for our son to be christened on board the tall ship the Sir Winston Churchill while the ship was docked in London.

On one of his voyages, Colin was enjoying a cuppa on deck during a short break and someone came up to him and said ‘were you ever in the services??’ Colin said, ‘yes – how did you guess’ to which the reply was ‘well within 2 days of being on the ship you have figured out how to skive off work without being caught!’ Colin had realised that if you were on galley duty and were wearing an apron, then when on deck you weren’t asked to pull a rope or do anything, so he simply put on an apron when he wanted a quiet 10 minutes alone with a cup of tea.!

Of course he did pull his weight on the ship (literally) and even climbed to the top of the mast to stand in the Crows Nest. He was truly happy when facing the wild ocean and the challenges of a voyage on a tall ship.

Things changed in the early 90’s and companies began reorganising and Colin was made redundant after 23 years with Texaco. It was quite a challenge to adapt to life outside the corporate world. He dabbled in a few ventures and businesses to keep himself busy.

EULOGY

After 11 years of marriage, when we thought we could not have children, life threw a joyous surprise and Harry was born in 1996 just one week before Colin's 57th birthday. He referred to this new baby as his retirement present. With the new responsibility of a young child we thought our travelling would be curtailed but then Colin came up with the idea of renting out our home in London and spending a year in South Africa and then a year in Australia and New Zealand before Harry started school. We arrived in South Africa in 1998 and -- well we never got to Australia.

Colin enjoyed the fresh challenge of moving to a new country and quickly settled into life in South Africa. He made new friends and loved the local scenery, the wine farms and a chance to take up playing golf. For a while we even ran a business together in South Africa – a steep learning curve for both of us.

During his full life, Colin tried a number of things – in Europe he did Rally driving, for his 50th birthday he went Scuba diving on the Great Barrier Reef, he also sailed the English Channel in a small yacht, tried white water rafting in Borneo, flew in Concorde, piloted a Tiger Moth, flew in a hot air balloon, and flew in a glider as well as a helicopter on several occasions. He went husky sledding in Alaska, he attempted horse-riding, skied in Italy and Scotland, rode motorbikes – he even attempted to learn how to wind surf in Kenya. After falling off the board for half an hour he came back to the beach declaring 'this isn't as easy as it looks"! He also loved classic cars and owned and restored a long list of cars during his life but his special favourite was his beloved Alvis which is still sitting in our garage in South Africa.

He faced life head on and was certainly willing to try new things, meet new people and go to new places.

He could be a contradiction – outwardly a crusty old dinosaur but yet willing to embrace new technology and be open to new ideas. Outwardly a cynic yet he was actually a romantic and quite sentimental. He was a product of his time, having to grow up quickly and he took his responsibilities seriously – but didn't take life too seriously. He was very kind and generous and often helped someone less fortunate without any fuss and never seeking reward or

EULOGY

telling others about such good deeds. He was a very loyal friend and most of all loved to share laughter with good company. He was immensely proud of his 3 children – and like many Englishmen he probably didn't say it to their faces as much as he should have. But I heard him speak so proudly of them and their many different talents and achievements. He was stoical and never indulged in self-pity and both these characteristics were clearly visible as he faced his battle with cancer in this past year. He faced that challenge head on and did his best to fill the last 12 months with happy times spent with friends and family. I have many photos of him taken during 2017 and he is always smiling with a glass in his hand

I have cried an ocean of tears as I come to terms with this awful loss. I knew this day was coming, but I was just not quite ready to let him go. As the weeks have passed I have tried to learn how to focus on the happier memories and to be grateful for having Colin in my life. He loved his family, he loved his friends and for 36 years he loved me – he was not a saint – but who would want to be married to a Saint? I have known what it is to be loved steadfastly for most of my adult life and that was a privilege.

So now Colin is facing his final touchdown. Some of his ashes were scattered into the sea in South Africa – we thought it appropriate to let the ocean take part of him. Some ashes were also scattered at his Golf Club in South Africa, where he spent many happy hours. I brought his remaining ashes back to England with me on board an Airbus A380 – an aircraft he admired; so I think he would have approved.

As you can imagine I have received many emails and cards from people near and far who remember Colin and the common theme through most of them is that people remember the good times they shared with him and the fun and the laughter -- I know he would not want us to be sitting here with sad faces. So I will close now by reading this simple poem which I think sums up how Colin would like to be remembered:

EULOGY

... it is called After Glow....

After Glow

I'd like the memory of me
To be a happy one

I'd like to leave an after
glow of smiles when
Life is done

I'd like to leave an echo
Whispering softly
Down the ways

Of happy times and
Laughing times and
Bright and sunny days

I'd like the tears of those
Who grieve, to dry
Before the sun

Of Happy Memories that I
Leave when life is done