

## **A TRIBUTE FOR DAD BY CATHERINE CHINERY**

How to start? Dad loved Alice in Wonderland and so I have borrowed some words from Lewis Carroll.

*“The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. Where shall I begin please your majesty he asked. Begin at the beginning the King said.....and go on till you come to the end, then stop.”*

So, Dad, here goes.

Dad was born in London in 1933. He told us a story, with a twinkle in his eye, about how he sustained a childhood war injury. It went something like this: During the war when many children were evacuated dad and his sister continued to live at home. They would sleep on camp beds under the stairs. One night a V2 bomb hit and demolished the nearby library, rocking their house and a quart bottle fell off a shelf and hit dad on the head, causing, in his words, *“much pain and a minor cut and I never did get any compensation from the War Injuries Committee”*. Eventually dad was evacuated with Westminster City School, where he had earned a scholarship. Again in his words he *“fell hopelessly in love with the headmaster’s daughter..... she was 23 and broke his heart by marrying the Woodwork Teacher!”*

The school returned in 1946. Dad never really settled and, after a failed adventure to France trying to work his way to Australia to make his fortune; in March 1949 dad took the King’s shilling and joined the Royal Navy.

So began dad’s long, distinguished and much loved career in the Senior Service. He served on many ships and shore bases. Joining as a Boy 2<sup>nd</sup> class and retiring in 1988 as a Lieutenant Commander MBE specialising as a MCDO.

Dad married mum in 1956. They had been friends a long time before falling in love. Dad told me he used to pick mum up from work on his motorbike and they would go to the pictures and for walks in the park.

In the same year they married dad got a posting to Hong Kong. The following year I appeared. After returning to the UK and a few years later my brother Peter was born, followed by my baby brother Paul. As a Forces family, we moved around quite a bit, new house, new school, new friends every couple of years.

Personally, I loved my life as a Forces child. How many children wake up for school to find the kitchen full of divers, who had been working all night and had come back to the Boss’ house, trying to cook breakfast themselves using a teaspoon to turn the bacon, or find live scallops swimming in the bath. How many daughters can say that their dad came screaming to a halt outside their school, in a Bomb Disposal Land Rover with lights and sirens going because there had been a bomb threat .... Or get to go and watch their Olympic standard dad clay pigeon shooting, in all weathers, I did.

How many little boys have pedalled their go-kart and dumper truck up and down the parquet flooring of BRNC on Christmas Day as dad was duty. My brothers have.

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Dad had fond memories of so many places throughout his life; latterly, Hong Kong, Dartmouth, Scotland and Portsmouth.....the list goes on.

Dad loved his family. Mum, my brother Paul, our late brother Peter and myself. He loved and was very proud of all his grandchildren and great grandchildren and loved their visits. Dad missed mum dreadfully, she passed away almost 7 years ago and we had her service in this Church and burial at Acorn Ridge.

I would like to mention a few of Dad's hobbies:

**Gardening:** Dad loved his garden and his fish and would be outside at every opportunity.

**Holidaying:** He and mum loved to holiday... with family in Cyprus and a much dreamed of one in Barbados with friends. Mum and Dad spent holidays with my family in Dartmouth enjoying a Guinness or two in The Floating Bridge; in Cornwall with Paul's family and staying in Essex with Peter's family. But some of the amazing or slightly terrifying holidays were when we were younger, after dad found the caravan/camping bug. Many a trip to Devon and Cornwall with caravan, boat, aqua scooter, water skis, much wine and hordes of my brothers' friends. Other holiday makers would stare in disbelief as the boat was launched by dad and us into the waves with perfect synchronised teamwork.

Dad discovered eBay. He bought and sold many things including keyboards and musical organs. He taught himself to play and would serenade mum with various combo beats, including A Whiter Shade of Pale. All the grandchildren loved to play the organ and we have many happy memories of dancing about in the hall to the music.

Dad excelled with sewing and knitting machines and could give Mary Berry a run for her money with cooking and baking, again self-taught. He produced rich fruit cakes, maturing in brandy soaked muslin nappies, for us and many others. His very last cake is at the Craven Arms, so I hope you will all enjoy a slice later and all his cakes can be viewed on his website.

**Marmalade** was dad's thing too. His speciality.... Gunpowder Proof Marmalade made with a good tot or two of Pusser's Rum.

Dad loved a barbecue and a party. His parties were famous in Newbury and having returned from a deployment to the USA one winter, a large barbecue appeared on our drive. So, yes, dad had to try it out ending up barbecuing under the car port in the snow.

I remember a party in Hong Kong. A friend of mine's parents had a 'Come as you were when the Ship Went Down bash' Dad took it completely literally. He arrived carrying a wooden ships wheel and dressed in a bath towel.... Only a bath towel.

That also brings to mind a fancy dress party when I was a little girl. No princess costume for me. Dad spent ages making a papier mache Siebe Gorman Diving Helmet. A little uncomfortable but absolutely brilliant. I won.

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At their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary party dad tried the party trick of opening a bottle of champagne with his sword.... Less said about that the better, other than to say it didn't quite go to plan, dad blamed the champagne bottle.... Another of their parties involved the bathroom lightpull, toilet flush and even sausages being booby-trapped with a thunderflash. Very funny dad.

Dad liked to share his partying. I have had the privilege of attending some of the Naval Summer Balls with dad, mum, aunties and uncles and only in November 2018 my husband Bruce and brother Paul were guests of dad at the MCDOA Dinner. I believe a good time was had by all and certainly an unforgettable experience I have been told. He was also, very much looking forward to attending the unveiling of the Vernon Mine Warfare & Diving Monument in March. Let's hope dad is up there partying with mum, Peter and the rest of our family.

What can I say about you dad. Dad I can sum you up in one word.... Superhero. Modern day Superhero's might wear cloaks, turn green, spin webs or fly. I am not sure you did any of these, if you did it was in secret.... but you were and always will be my Superhero. You carried me on your shoulders as a little girl. You taught me how to French knit, to ride my first bike and to fish for and gut mackerel. You taught me the dangers of the sea, the importance of learning to swim and to float on my back when I got tired and especially important, if I saw a shark, to sink to the bottom and act like a rock! You gave me my first Guinness, probably not the best timing just before an interview for the WRNS. You introduced me to Pusser's Rum; You walked me down the aisle. But even as a superhero you were terrified to hold your grandsons when I first gave them to you. You gave me so much dad. How can I thank you.

Dad, to end as I started, on a borrowed quote. I was looking through one of your notebooks recently and came across a quote you had written down which made me smile... Your sense of humour prevailed, through all your pain and suffering.

The quote reads "Inside every old sailor is a young sailor wondering what the hell happened."

Dad I love and miss you every second of every day, our days together, trips to the garden centres, shopping trips, coffee and iced buns at Marks & Spencer, and exchanging pebbles from holiday beaches. I am so proud of you dad and so very proud to be your daughter. Thank you for being my dad, my superhero. I love you and will always remember you laughing and saying "Growing Old is not for the faint hearted!"

