

Eulogy, read by Paul

Sidney Ronald Thomas Patrick Muchmore was a legend. With a name like that he was always destined to be so!

Ron was born on the 20th July 1931 to parents Jo and Sid, a pair of characters in their own right, a union forged between a street wise cockney and a dynamic Irish woman who had worked in service.

Ron had two sisters Pat and Maureen. His early years were spent in Belsize Road, Kilburn, where the family lived with Jo's brothers Tommy and Willy. Family legend has it that Belsize Road was a hub of entertainment where parties and card schools were held most Saturday nights which continued through to Sunday mornings. Family celebration and gambling were to be enduring features in Ron's life.

At the outbreak of World War 2 Jo and the children were evacuated to the village of Great Milton, Oxfordshire, where they shared a large house with 3 other families. Ron's cousin Peggy recalls " Evacuees were not liked... and the Lady of the Manor invited everyone for tea but Madge Jo's sister wasn't impressed "By God she thinks she is Lady Muck!" Ron was rarely surrounded by quiet, reserved people. Ron remembered his Dad, Sid, cycling the 30-40 miles from London on Sundays bringing food and presents, staying briefly before turning back to London. Not surprisingly the stay at Great Milton was short lived and the family returned, sat on armchairs on the back of a borrowed lorry.

In 1942, aged 11, Ron went to study for the Priesthood at St. Edmund's Seminary, Ware, perhaps a surprising vocation for someone whose future interests included smoking, drinking, gambling and golf or..... Perhaps not! His stay was relatively brief and he left because he was homesick.

Finchley Grammar School, December 1944 notes:

Jan 10. Opening of Spring term welcomes, amongst others R.S.Muchmore.

Ron was to get a number of mentions in this and future editions of the magazine. He is pictured as a member of the Football 1st XI 1946-47, the Cricket 1st XI 1948-9, he won a prize for academic achievement in 1946. The pen portrait for the 1st XI Football team 46-47 reads;

"R. Muchmore – Centre forward; The "goal getter" of the side has scored 12 goals in 5 games. A wonderful opportunist and decided asset to the team. Unfortunately, he has had an accident recently which may keep him out of the side for some time, and we fervently hope that he will be well enough to lead the forward line in his very capable manner. Awarded Colours."

Also, of particular interest was his Athletics prowess in 1946 he came 2nd in the 440 yards race, won in a time of 1min 7secs, and 1st in the 880 yards in a time of 2min 44.5secs clearly a precursor to Grandson David's talent for running!

Ron's National Service was a rich source of experiences and anecdotes. Muchmore 22197671 was discharged from service on 25th October 1951. Over the last few months, listening to tales evoked with amazing clarity, he would talk of strong alliances forged with irate Glaswegian cooks, who started each day with a bottle of Q.C. wine, though Ron declined this daily tippie, he was offered cups of tea and bacon butties – the fruits of strong friendship. He spoke of his involvement in lively pub brawls between rival regiments, he played football, he boxed, operated scams in

selling cigarettes and passouts in addition to the ongoing card schools. So it is with great amusement to read his leaving testimonial:

"Lance Corporal Muchmore has proved a very good, reliable and hardworking clerk. He is well spoken and has a quiet unassuming manner. He is honest and of sober habits!"

Appearance and reality and paradox are very firm themes in Ron's life.

On return to civvy street he carried on life in a similar lively way. Football was an enduring interest, playing Saturdays and Sundays and bruising encounters involving resounding names like Schillebeer, the Hennesey twins and Paddy Ryan would produce goals, frequent brawls, broken bones, and numerous trips to casualty. After National Service, Ron worked for Unilever before moving to BICC in Bloomsbury St. He always had a wicked sense of humour and was often up to mischief. On one occasion he made a chain of paperclips and attached it to the jacket of a colleague who was seen going into the lift and out through reception into the street with the paper clips dangling behind.

Ron and Gloria married at Quex Rd. Kilburn in July 1955. Daughters Stephanie and Deborah came along and they settled into family life at 13 Birchington Rd before moving up to St. Helens in 1967. Ron continued working for BICC. In September 1973 he was appointed Pension Fund Secretary and he carried on this responsible role with diligence and energy until his retirement in May 1991.

The legend continued- his interest in sport; with Jackie Bamber they managed a Bleak Hill Rovers boys football team in the 1970's, he developed a passion for Saints and golf and it is in 1972 when I met the man for the first time- scary at first, but after nearly 40 years the legend that was the father-in-law became a best friend.

The photographs in the Mass booklet, beautifully compiled by Amy, speak far more eloquently than I can of a man filled with love and humour, immersed in his real and enduring passion- his family. A love of family that he clearly carried on from his Mum and Dad, Sid and Jo. At our wedding reception Father Victor Bridges was saying a few words including "good children have good parents" to which Jo in her version of a stage whisper, gave the imprimatur "That's right Father!"

Many of the memorable events in Ron's life involved his head and his cars. There was the time one Christmas Eve when we went down to Trafalgar Square to sing Christmas Carols-one of the many magic times. After a drink in a pub we all piled into the back of a cab, Ron the last one in lunged in and banged his head on the opening, nearly knocking himself senseless. This was the third mishap of the evening, having been propositioned going into the pub and being dive bombed by a pigeon.

On another occasion, again in London, he was having trouble lighting the oven, eventually he put a lighter inside and the resulting explosion left him looking as though he had a fantastic tan until you noticed he had no eyebrows left.

The final head incident was on Sherdley Golf Course, a group of us were playing, for once I got the ball off the ground but the sliced shot missed Ron's head by inches- I thought he would be furious, but as ever he saw the funny side "Nice shot Paul, I'll stand behind you for the next one!"

Cars were important to him, the first a Ford Anglia nicknamed LC, a white Viva, a Hillman Hunter and I recall his joy and pride on getting his first company car, a Ford Cortina.

He also helped me with repairing my cars - replacing clutch cables in a box Viva with the help of Jonny Bridge, collecting and replacing doors on an old mark 2 Cortina. A car was also involved in another example of his wicked sense of humour. He was washing his car when he was approached on the drive by some Jehovah's witnesses. One of them said "Do you know the devil?" Without hesitating he replied "Yes she's in the kitchen cooking the Sunday dinner." The tales are legion.

There was also great sadness, he felt the loss of his own Mum and Dad deeply and he was devastated when Gloria died those few months ago in August- his own words caught the complexity of his feelings "It's impossible to put it into words- where do you start and end? Perhaps 55 years of marriage is enough- that and the family in the front benches of the church." It is a blessing that they are now together.

He struggled to come to terms with her loss, but he had a plan- he wanted to make his home a place that he was proud of and a place where people were welcome. He drew up a list of works to be done- decorating, carpets to be replaced, settees and chairs to be cleaned and a new fire in the front room. He recruited us all to be involved- "The A team" and he had a lot of notes on a piece of paper ending with "The A team finished!" He even found time to sort out the decorator's Dad's tax affairs!

This involved the family coming together to share their thoughts, feelings and laughter in a common endeavour. The legend had worked his magic again. Although Ron was always happy when you saw him, he thought about things very deeply and he did have a deep sense of spirituality- he talked about the increasing length of his night prayers as he prayed for the victims of disasters and the suffering of many ordinary people.

He was a legend when he told about his new will - he said he was giving a particular amount to "the girls" and particular amounts to each of the grandchildren and he looked at me with a smile and said "I've left you nothing" and I smiled back and said "I suppose love and laughter will have to do then" and we smiled and shared the moment.

He was a legend when I was walking back to the bench after Gloria's eulogy he was smiling as I came towards him, he shook my hand and said "Thanks son." He was a legend going on Facebook and Skype so that he could follow more closely the lives of his grandchildren and it was a particular delight when he could tell us what they had been up to.

He was a legend on Christmas Day- sat at the head of the table the life and soul of the party speaking to each of the grandchildren, winding them up about Christmas cracker jokes, making what could have been a sad day one that was joyful and memorable- a major blessing in the last few weeks.

Other blessings include being in daily contact with his two girls over the past few months- he thrived on the fuss and the attention, but at the same time being happy to tell the two of them to go home.

It was a blessing that Ian was able to become part of Ron and Gloria's routine over the past few years, walking their dog Elsa around to their house. He was always assured of a warm welcome. He often helped with a few little tasks, shared a coffee and then put the world to rights, and there was always a special treat for Elsa.

It was a blessing that he could spend more time with each of his grandchildren, to see each of them happy and flourishing- he had Peter around to sort out his computer and he was immensely proud of him studying for a PhD and on his way to becoming Doctor Hodgson.

It was a blessing that Amy could send photographs of Christmas Day to him and come around and share happy times, settled into her life at Leeds University.

It was a blessing that he and Dave could deepen their friendship through frequent Skype conversations.

It was a blessing that he could see Lorna and Amy go on holiday to Rome and spend the stash of euros that he found after Gloria had died and for him to share Lorna's excitement of going to Israel for the first time.

It was a blessing that having seen Tom disappointed in a number of job interviews that he was able to enjoy his success in gaining a permanent job at AQA.

It was a blessing that he could watch England beat the Aussies in the Ashes series, and at a time that matched his sleep pattern, he could watch it from the comfort of his bed.

It was a blessing that he died peacefully in his chair at home, up, dressed, cup of tea in front of him with the paper open at the horses. It was a blessing that he won £270 in his final week and still had money to collect on his betting slip the day he died.

It was a major blessing that he was full of life with so much more to give.

So the legend has gone and with his passing there is left an immense void of pain and separation. But the legend becomes the legacy—he has shown us the importance of family and humour, how to be a loving and warm and generous Dad and Grampa, how to be a true friend.

His cousin Peggy's words sum up all our feelings "He will always be remembered with love, kindness and fun."

His last words to Stephanie on Friday night were "Goodbye love, thanks for coming." Words of love and comfort. I am sure that to each of us he would say, "Bye and thank you for coming into my life."

God Bless you Ron.