

Job Done

Eulogy Peter Underwood

Never Ask Permission, only ask forgiveness

This was Dad's motto for life. One which I do adhere to.

In this eulogy I will try and share with you his personality in various memories we have that celebrates Dad's Entrepreneurial spirit, his impulsiveness, his generosity his kindness and love of people and what they do.

He was born locally in December 1938 to Vera and Jesse during the war on a farm managed by his parents in Haveringland which we used to call 'Happyland' as he used to sing Bread of Heaven in the mornings when we lived in Ludham while he was getting ready to go to work over there.

Jesse his dad would come into Reepham market every Thursday drop of the week's shopping list at Hardiman's and go to the bank and do his Market business. So Reepham was always in Dad's life since 1938.

He was educated in Town Close and Gresham's, he was dyslexic. He had 2 sisters Margo and Roslyn

He did National Service with the marines which he said was the making of him , and I would agree. He was punctual and couldn't abide lateness (sorry dad) after years of arriving late everywhere, (I am now a stickler for punctuality, apples don't fall far) He also used to wake us up with the sound of The Reveille (REV al ee) du de du de du du du duu pull off the duvets and open the curtains (it was truly horrible)

Back from the marines and he, his dad and his sister Margo and brother in Law set up Gibbs Farms in Haveringland - a successful business supplying Garden Centres supplies locally and later more nationally.

He had adapted an Austin 7 and put window boxes around it filled with Pansies while he drove around selling his garden supplies. He has always loved flowers. and while he didn't enjoy getting old, losing his sight and retiring he did enjoy growing his flowers, as many people in Reepham may concur, if they were the receivers of his abundant crop of Sweet Peas last summer and many a HollyHock spreads happiness around Reepham as he enjoyed a spot of Guerrilla Gardening.

He met mum over a bed in the Norfolk & Norwich while she was nursing and he was visiting his sister Roz who also had diabetes which dad developed about 12 years ago. He used to endearingly announce Mum's presence when she entered a room with "bacon and beans" which was mum's breakfast trolley announcement in the hospital.

Mum remembers her first date with dad, he took her on a romantic walk. She asked where they were (she was from London) He replied "I'll tell you when we get back to the car" He then revealed it was the Whitlingham Sewage Works! She says - she should have known then that life would be far from average with Peter in it.

Dad was never one to miss an opportunity and while dating mum, one evening he had 2 tickets to the MadderMarket and as Mum started a Nightshift halfway through the performance, he arranged another nurse to take her place at the interval for the second half!

He proposed after 13 days to mum and 3 years later Judy accepted.

In 1983 they bought a run down nursery selling conifers called Bennetts and they grew it up from there, becoming Bawdeswell Garden Centre a year later. Most of our friends had a 'rite of passage' working at the GC at some stage. They used to have a bell across the drive in entrance which would go off in our living room which was adjacent to the GC and I remember the bell going off for the occasional customer coming in in the early days but not for long as his success creating all his new areas grew. Some of these developments I remember, Mollys Fruit and Veg shop, The first small Coffee Shop, Selling Conservatories, The restaurant, The Christmas Grotto, Cooks Food, The farm shop and every year his Summer Jazz, He was a very lucky man! There were several days each year when he had to have a staff member directing traffic, until he put his own parking system in place, he was very pleased with his carpark!

I remember in the evenings when the GC had closed, cycling around the plant area which we would call the maze under the overhead irrigation system on hot summer evenings getting soaked. And the summer he tried to sell inflatable swimming pools at the back of the GC and the enjoyment to us and the local kids (our very own pool that was a fun summer).

Dad had an entrepreneurial mind and couldn't leave a new idea. The adaptation of the irrigation system where the hose pipe is fed around the plants and tiny individual nozzles inserted along the hose directed at each plant was actually revelatory as less water was wasted on the paving area and a long job watering plants was stopped.

When we lived in Ludham he had invested in a business called Moores of Stalham with George and Bob making wooden starch trays for Sweet Factories and notice

boards (Moore's board) and with the off cuts of the frames of the notice boards he made Marble Whizz runs in his workshop in Ludham. We did have fun with that. The marbles were a perfect fit.

Clare has remembered most of Dad's ideas

His desire for slippers with lights on, the Marble Whizz Run, This was the late 70s these toys didn't exist, a lawnmower that collects grass he did develop this - didn't work it put grooves in the grass.

Instead of flight stewards, trays that drop down above people's heads and rotate on a conveyor belt!! This thankfully remained an idea in Peter's head!

A fluorescent umbrella was his obsession with road safety, he got this for Christmas and went on about how marvellous it was

Magnetic Sudoku boards.

His final make was his bird table to catch the seeds in the cone below from falling in his paving and growing wheat and to stop the pigeons and squirrels gaining access it had a draw at the base to catch the seeds that he can then redistribute (picture in the Order of Service).

Dad was impulsive and I remember him coming home to Ludham to a family of 5 of us including a Golden Retriever with an excellent new family car an MG Midget. I can still hear mum's response of exasperation!

It was around this time he and our neighbour in Ludham John Barnsley bought a Silver Cloud 2 Rolls Royce, shipped it to New Orleans and drove around New Orleans for a month trying to sell it while taking in all the Trad Jazz. We used to call him Pomegranate in response to the pips on the landline overseas call..the call was up when the pips came pip pip pip

Dad's love of trad jazz continued in his many summer jazz days at the GC in his Millennium Garden.

He loved to try and solve a practical problem. When we lived in Ludham we used to walk to Womack Staithe to feed the ducks and there was (even in the 70s) a fast road with no footpath so dad took it upon himself and rallied some locals to spend every weekend making a footpath for everyone to walk safely along the busy road. He didn't ask permission from the council for this. That was not dad's way. The foot path is still there.

He definitely found it very frustrating if he couldn't work out a solution to a practical problem.

He was kind, when I was really ill and living in Brighton, he would ring me in the morning and ask what I was doing that day. He insisted that you should always end the day with more than you started. Getting dressed, going for a walk or

making a cake. I saw that with his care for mum he would make her go for a walk no matter how much she didn't want to go because she will always return feeling better than when they left. (If Reephams friends can help her with this, this would be wonderful)

His interest and love of people was enthusiastic. Dad was not able to go into a pub, restaurant, train, plane or take a walk without finding out something about the people he encountered. He would always leave a pub knowing something new about someone. A skill which he later honed in Rotary.

Dad loved boats and sailed a lot, went on sailing trips and generally loved messing about on the water. On one trip with a group of friends sailing in Greece, while anchored at sea, they were settling down to lunch and they didn't have any Mayonnaise so dad jumped in the water and swam to a nearby boat to ask if they had any. He was duly given Mayonnaise and swam back with it problem solved!

He later bought a motor boat, the Alamanda and, after several years of enjoying the Norfolk Broads on her, he had her put on the Thames for a summer. I joined him on it one day and after a lot of fun I had to leave. Not being able to moor up in central London between London Bridge and Tower Bridge he pulled up next to a large boat and told me to jump off. I then opened a door on the boat (waterside) into a stage area of a conference in attendance to some bemused attendees while I walked across the front of the stage and out the other side to Thames walk where I was due to meet Clare! I don't think us Underwood kids embarrass easily due to the amount of embarrassment endured growing up with him. So when my boys say I'm embarrassing them I tell them that is my job!

My mum used to say to me "I am just married to him, you are related to him"

It is a privilege to be related to you Dad and I will endeavour to keep your memory alive in a fairly forthright Underwood way! Apologies All its a genetic problem!