

Dad's Eulogy

(For Jenkyn Hughes' funeral on 10th July 2017
 Paragraphs in **Bold** will be read by Tom Hughes)

Welcome

Thank you all for coming today, especially as some of you have come a very long way indeed. Dad would have been really pleased to see so many of you here. He always did like to be the centre of attention and it is right that, on this day, of all days, that he *now* most definitely is.

It is an *immense* privilege to be able to say a few words about him and I cannot deny that it has not been a daunting task to summarise such a long and really very busy life of such a remarkable person. For this reason I have asked my eldest son Tom, to help me out in a couple of places, in delivering this Eulogy.

Longevity

Dad was born on the 31st May 1913, so he was 103 years and 363 days old, when he died. I think it is ok to call that 104.

It is remarkable to think, just how long a life that really was:

- He was born just *1 year* after the Titanic sank.
- Only *9 years* before that, the Wright brothers made their pioneering *first* flight at Kitty Hawk.
- There have been 24 changes of Prime minister during his lifetime, and when he was born, Herbert Asquith was Prime Minister and George V was on the throne.
- And of course pretty much everything we now take for granted: jet aeroplanes, computers, TV, space rockets, the internet, motorways, plastic, antibiotics and even the humble zip have been invented during his lifetime.

Turning 100

4 years ago when Dad turned 100, a number of interesting things happened:

- Of course, he received his card from the Queen, which was very exciting. People regularly asked to see it and Dad often obliged by pulling it out of his shopping bag when in town, even at the butchers, I believe.
- He did manage to have not 1 but at least 3 parties on consecutive days to celebrate his 100th birthday, with friends, family and then more friends and any family still around who were up for it. As many here today, will know only too well Dad *did* like a party....

- When he turned 100, he went from being a *very old man* to a *celebrity*, which he greatly enjoyed. He often told the story, with *undisguised glee*, of one of the times he caught his flight at Heathrow, for one of his many trips to New Zealand to see his daughter, Sheila and their family. He was taken in a wheelchair to the plane first, and well before the other passengers. On arrival, and there to greet him on entering the plane, was the entire cabin crew, with a round of applause, a glass of champagne and a short speech was given by the Captain. Of course Dad could not resist a reply speech of his own. In recent times, *this* was how he liked to travel.
- He also started to confuse computer systems, due to his advanced years and his uncanny ability to continue to travel the world unaided. One of my lasting memories will be the time when I dropped him off to check him in for a flight to New Zealand. At the time, he was 99 $\frac{3}{4}$ and the check-in computer calculated that he was *minus* 3 months old, and thus not yet born..... It took 6 check-in staff about 30 minutes to fix the problem. He *absolutely* loved that...
- But the most common thing, as he turned 100, was the number of times / was asked: "How did he live so long and be *still* so active?" So I thought it would be interesting to look at some of Dad's unique qualities to try and answer this question.

Health

He clearly had good genes. He lived to 104, but his brother lived to 93 and his sister to 99 and $\frac{3}{4}$. We so nearly had 2 centenarians in the family. I can't really remember Dad having any significant illness at all during his life, until the last few months. Yes, he had the normal ailments we all suffer from, but generally they were short-lived and not very serious. However he *did* constantly have small stuff fixed, just like a lovingly maintained classic car.

He *did* of course have artificial hips, through arthritis *and* a number of falls and dislocations, one of which, rather dramatically, occurred in Hong Kong, where he ended up in a Chinese hospital for a week. This nearly did for him, however he did manage to escape by the skin of his teeth, with the aid of the British Consulate. Undaunted, he returned to New Zealand twice after that. Overall he did *in fact* have a total of 4 artificial hips. The 2nd pair was only necessary because he wore out the 1st pair and was *thus* was eligible for an upgrade... Credit goes to the pioneering hip unit at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital. Dad was always keen to try new treatments being offered, and it stood him in good stead... *Literally*.

Very importantly, he retained his razor-sharp mind and uncanny memory right up to the end.

The following illustrates this so well. During the last few weeks of this life, he was based in the excellent Halsdown House Nursing Home in Exmouth. His friends Bob and Bev Glanfield, at very short notice and with great resourcefulness, arranged this when it was clear could not live at home on return from hospital. After he had been at the home for a couple of weeks and it became necessary to pay for his 3rd, and what turned out to be his final, week in the home, we

needed to produce a cheque to cover the fee. Dad was still very much in charge of his affairs at this point. His writing has never been the best so I filled out all the details for him and presented him with the cheque to sign. However, he was just sitting there looking at it had *still* not signed it and was. I asked him, "Well aren't you going to sign it then?" and he replied, "Not yet ... I still haven't seen the invoice!"On producing it, he then scrutinized the details very carefully, including querying the rates...,and he finally said ... "ok" and signed it.

Dad stayed fit all his life, despite eating like a horse and having a distinct fondness for sweeties, nougat and enormous puddings at meals... In his case it was "quite a lot of what you fancy does you good". You didn't see him visit the gym, or "go out for a run", although he was an avid walker all his life. He did just seem to manage to maintain good health, by being incredibly active and busy pretty much all the time.

An active life

But Dad wasn't *just* someone who lived for a long time. He lived a very full and active life, relishing every moment of it. Much of it involved his family, his wife Anne, his eldest son Richard, who sadly departed us last year, his daughter Sheila, our partners and of course his 7 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. He was always fully engaged in our lives, was scrupulous at remembering all of our birthdays and regularly saw his continuously extending family, whether in person or even virtually. We were so lucky to have him for so long. I especially appreciate this, as the youngest child to an older father. He was 45 when I was born, but I feel have done well to know him for so long and we grew increasingly closer, as the years went by.

However family was just *one* aspect of his life.

One of the things that always amazed us about Dad was: *How did he fit in all the other stuff?* The list is impressive: Golf, sailing, bowls, freemasonry, gardening, opera, wine appreciation, Rotary club, Macwester society, banking association, designing and building 2 homes, The Welsh society, badminton, a shared family retreat in Pembrokeshire, which he *also* had built with his brother and sister, and not to mention a *highly successful career*.

He started working for Barclays Bank here in Devon before the war, initially here in Exmouth as a junior. He *returned* to Exmouth after the war, when Richard and Sheila, were born. The family then moved to Essex for 27 years, where I was born, *unusually* in a bank. *Not* at the counter I would add, but in the bank flat above... He did end up managing 3 banks in the Leigh on Sea/Southend area *simultaneously*. He returned here with Mum to Exmouth for the 3rd and *final* time in 1979, once he had retired.

He achieved excellence and deep involvement in *all* he did, often the president or treasurer of his societies – He *only* retired as treasurer of one of his Masonic lodge societies, when he was

100 and that was to hand over to a youngster of 75. However he had already taken on the presidency of the Past Rotarians at 99 and was *still* in office when he passed 100. He played his last game of golf here at East Devon, Budleigh, one day after his 100th birthday, playing with Richard, his nephew Michael and myself. At the peak of his golfing prowess, he achieved a very respectable handicap of 10.

Of course, there was the sailing... Involvement in sailing in our family was kind of *not* an option. We *all* have a little seawater in our veins, with Mum being born into a sail-making and seafaring family in Cowes and Dad starting his sailing life here in Exmouth in 1936, where he crewed for Betty Williams (a *formidable* skipper, Dad told me). Sailing was Mum and Dad's passion which they shared together as they cruised all over the Thames Estuary, Holland, Belgium, France, the Channel Isles and the Devon and Cornwall. They sold their last boat, *Spindrift*, a Macwester ketch, which they had for 25 years, when he was 84. They both carried on sailing for a subsequent season in a chartered Navy yacht, which they took to the Scilly Isles.

But he never really did give up sailing, and was still at the tiller even as recently as last year, at the grand old age of 103, on the Exe Sailing Club Sailabiliy boat, called "No Excuse". The Exe Sailing Club has been extremely important to Dad all his life, crewing nationals prior to the 2nd WW, cruising during retirement and especially in the last 8 years, since my Mother died. The Friday coffee mornings and social calendar have been a vital opportunity to make new friends and stay connected with old ones. It seems only right, and we are so pleased, that we will be convening there after the service.

Organised

One of the reasons Dad could achieve all this and make it seem so effortless was down to his unique powers of organisation and uncanny memory.

Dad's office is something to behold. Everything he did, and *has* done is documented meticulously. Everything is in folders and in its rightful place. A master index explains the function and location of every folder, with a map of how to find it. "Wine society records: shelf 2 left hand side." ... As you may appreciate this has made sorting his affairs considerably easier, although much *is* written in his trademark drunken spider script.... so there is still an element of deduction and sleuthing required.

As children we came to respect, and fear, what was known as his '*Little Red Book*'. This was a master document into which *all* financial transactions were recorded. Family were *not* immune to its reach. If any of us borrowed say a fiver, *in* the book it went. Months if not years might pass, *but* there was no escape. On our next visit to home, out would come the book ... "Now I see that we still have debts to settle", he would say...

Even his legendary wine cellar was mapped and documented with all incomings and outgoings duly recorded in a wine ledger. And as many of you will have discovered to your pleasure, it was a very busy wine cellar indeed!

Granny

Of course, he couldn't really have managed any of this without the support of his beloved wife Anne, my Granny. She was the light of his life and his best friend, loving partner and an island of tranquillity in his hectic life. She had a tremendous sense of humour and was the best thing that ever happened to Grandpa, a fact which he often reminded us.

The story of how they came together was a *classic* wartime romance worthy of a silver screen Hollywood movie. As the 2nd World War started, Grandpa volunteered for the Royal Artillery as a driver and then a gunnery officer as he helped defend the UK against enemy bombing raids in Newcastle and then the Solent. When he was stationed on the Isle of Wight, he met Granny for the first time, who was then in the WRENS, and was instantly smitten - no one else would do. During this posting to the Isle of Wight, his platoon was billeted in a field next to an apple orchard owned by Granny's father. He had expressed concern to Grandpa about how vulnerable his apples were to this field full of hungry soldiers.... Grandpa, as commanding officer, *implored* his troops to resist raiding the orchard, as the success of his conquest of Granny was at stake. That seemed to do the trick and unsurprisingly the apples were left untouched However wartime clearly did not make for an easy romance and they managed to get engaged 3 times off and on throughout the war, including a 3-year break off while he was serving abroad. However thankfully Granny realised his many qualities, as well as his persistence and they were married immediately after the war in 1946.

They had a very happy marriage of 62 years and after she died, 8 years ago, the service was held in this church and she is buried just up the road at St Peter's Burial Ground. This is where Grandpa will be buried shortly and they can be reunited again.

Resolve

Dad's persistent courting of Mum and never giving up on what he believed was right, clearly illustrates one of his other qualities; and that is his ... what shall we call it ... *resolve*. Others might describe it as dogged determination or even just plain stubbornness...

I am sure many of you here will have experienced this first hand. When he had decided that something needed to be done, it would *usually* happen one way or another. As kids we found this quite infuriating because he was *very, very* good at it. When we would have, let's call it, '*a difference of approach*', we would have a very friendly discussion and you think you had

convinced him of the merits of your point of view. A little time later he would return to the subject and *somewhat* talk you round the other way. Many management gurus could learn a thing or two about his methods.

A perfect example was in his final year of driving, when I was trying to persuade him to buy a *sensible* car. I *did* suggest one of those Smart cars, small, easy, relatively harmless, with lots of plastic panels. “I don’t like one of those silly things”, he said.... The next thing, I get a call from a garage here in Exmouth, where he is in the process of buying a totally unsuitable car that he had taken a fancy to. When I tried to talk him out of it, he just handed the phone over to the car salesman so *he* could convince me. And yes Dad did buy the car ...

A pioneer

Grandpa never really feared the future and was always willing to try new things, regardless of his age. I don’t think he thought he was old at all - he seemed to be in a permanent state of denial.... He enthusiastically learnt to use a computer for the first time at 85, although *my* father did need to become his IT helpdesk... He adopted Skype in his 90’s and even taught his daughter Sheila how to use it, so he could look her in the eye when he called her in New Zealand. He was such a keen user of Skype, that he astounded staff at Exeter Hospital, on his emergency admission a few months ago, by asking on arrival if they had Wi-Fi...

When he finally stopped driving at 101, he started using Amazon and Tesco online and also learnt how to use online banking. He was a big user of his mobile telephone, as many of you will probably have experienced in recent times. Even a few days before his death, he was trialling a brand new mobile phone...

He was an avid photographer, even creating an amazing photographic record during the 2nd World War. He loved taking, what we might now call ‘selfies’, with the family, at least 50 years before the term was coined. You can see some of the wonderfully spontaneous results in the photo slide show at the reception after the service.

Much of his openness to new ideas can be attributed to his wife, Anne. She was very experimental and really quite creative and encouraged Grandpa to become so too.

Grandpa just moved with the times and was always ready to try something new, if it looked useful.

Generosity

I would now like to say a few words about Dad's generosity, which was legendary. Whether it was tipping the dustmen or preceding his Christmas visits with a crate of wine prior to his arrival! (This *guaranteed* a warm welcome!). These acts were always from a sense of unconditional generosity. Dad was one of those people who paid forward with no expectation

of return. However, when he did get himself into a fix (and there were many) he was never short of support to come and help dig him out, sometimes literally. One unusually snowy Xmas, Dad was stuck at home, with a train to catch to come and visit us. All the taxis were grounded due to the snow. Simon, his gardener, came to the rescue in his Land Rover and he caught the train. Without the continued support from Simon and Sue, his housekeeper, he could not have managed to live independently at his beloved Tide Reach right up the end of his life.

Friends

Dad was extraordinarily social and valued relationships extremely highly. He made friends quickly and easily and it was always inspirational to watch him in action at a social gathering. Even if he started off knowing no one, he usually came away from it with a number of new chums, several invitations to drinks and probably a golf game arranged too.

He made friends regardless of age or background. For example, at the end of the Second World War, one of Dad's tasks was to oversee and manage the surrender of one the prized German 'pocket' battleships at Willemshaven in Germany, which was called the Prince Eugen. Dad was always amused that this was a funny job for an artillery officer... Within a short period of time Dad had quickly struck up a healthy rapport with the German Captain. After the surrender was completed and it came time to leave the ship, Dad was presented with a rather wonderful book by the Captain, which was an illustrated history of the ship from the early years of the war. This is now a treasured heirloom that will now stay in the family, as it epitomises Dad's capacity for good relationships, in *any* circumstance.

Dad has made many lasting and deep friendships with some amazing people. Because he was so old, he kept outliving his friends and he had an uncanny ability to 'regenerate' and make new ones that were increasingly younger than him. In recent times, many of these friends have provided vital assistance and support. Special mention should go to the two '*Bobs*', Glanfield and Green, and their wives Bev and Ginny. Between them they did much of the heavy lifting - literally at times... This was so fundamental to Dad's quality of life in his last months. It enabled Dad to have a dignified and comfortable end and as a family, we sincerely thank you for all the help you gave him.

I would like to share a few comments from Bob and Bev Glanfield, who could not be with us today:

"Jenks was always intelligent, balanced, thoughtful, caring, with a scarily good memory, and a huge sense of humour.

He always genuinely enjoyed his friends, and deeply appreciated his family, whom he loved so dearly.

So, we are both so delighted and profoundly privileged to have been one of his many mates, and to have had the chance to help him at times when he felt he needed it.....even though he didn't always admit it!"

Thank you as well as goodbye

So as we say goodbye here today, we want to say thank you Dad for so many things:

- The inspiration you gave us by demonstrating the importance of friends, family, generosity, fair play, *never* judging and not taking life too seriously.
- For marrying Mum and the genes you both gave us, which continue to filter down through the generations.
- For the opportunities you gave us throughout our lives and wonderful, happy childhoods.
- The fun stuff we did together, such as sailing, golf, long holidays in Wales and taking *me* fishing. I never really caught anything (and I don't even eat fish) ... but I have very fond memories of those times.
- The *wine*, of course.
- And for being around for so long and being such great company.

We miss you, but part of you still lives on in our family, in our memories and our hearts.

Thank you *all* for coming here today and celebrating his life.