

EULOGY - BOB PEARCE

For those of you that don't know me, I'm Sue, Bob's eldest daughter. On behalf of my Mum, Jill and my two sisters Keran & Sally I would like to thank you all for coming today and to say a few words about Bob and his life.

Our Dad was born in 1933 in Gladstone Road, Surbiton, to Edie and Tom Pearce. He was the first of 4 siblings.

At about 9 years old and during the Second World War, Bob was evacuated to a farm in Bideford, Devon and by all accounts the young townie, born and bred, loved every second of country life. Years later, when he had his own children, he would take us all back there for family holidays.

As a young man, Dad passed the requisite exams to attend Westminster College, originally with the ambition of becoming an Engineer. Such ambition was short lived however as during an inaugural tour of the College, he was apparently drawn to a class of chefs, in their fetching whites and their tall hats and decided, then and there, to change tack. He started his working life as a chef at St Thomas's Hospital.

During that time, wandering home one evening at the age of 17, he saw a pretty girl struggling to make a call from a dimly lit telephone box and - ever the gentleman, he stepped forward to the rescue with his cigarette lighter ablaze. He adored my Mum from that day onwards.

During my parents' courtship Dad was called up to do his National Service and served in the Army Catering Corp. Following that he became a chef at The Lansdowne private members club in London. He worked his way up there and on one occasion even cooked for Princess Margaret. However, a chef's working life was not as he'd envisaged, the unsociable hours were long and the kitchens were hot.

Soon he decided to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather before him and became a London black cab driver. He studied for two and a half years to do "The Knowledge", a skill that never left him until the very end. Dad could always tell you how to get from A to B anywhere in London- ever the cab driver though, perhaps it was not always by the quickest route.

Mum and Dad were married, in St Matthew's church, Surbiton in 1954 and went on to have 3 daughters, in quick succession. Sue, Keran and Sally – or as my Dad often referred to each of us No.1, No.2 and No.3.

He worked hard to build up a successful cab business to support his young family and his only "me time" was his beloved golf on a Sunday.

Anyone who knows of Dad will have heard about the fateful November morning in 1964 that in his early thirties, changed his life and that of all of his family forever. My sisters and I have very few memories of Dad before his accident – those all belong to Mum. We were too young.

The surgeons told Mum, when he was admitted, that he was unlikely to survive that first night. When he did just that, they said he would never walk or talk again and would be lucky to make 60 yrs of age. We grew up watching a man constantly defying all the odds against him, re learning all the basics of life - to walk and talk and even to tie his shoelaces. Typically, of his fierce independence and determination of spirit he soon gave all those medical predications - to coin one of Dad's favorite phrases – "a poke in the eye with a sharp stick" and proved the experts wrong. Topping it all off by surviving for almost 3 decades longer than expected.

He was around to see his three daughters grow, marry, have their own children and then to see those 4, much loved, grandchildren, Tom, Josh, Hannah and Joe, grow into fine young adults. Dad loved a good crossword and was an avid reader. He loved listening to anything by Frank Sinatra ("My Way" for us, will always be "Dad's song"). He'd happily while away time watching golf, cricket, snooker and any good Western. He regularly played bowls for years and enjoyed all the old classic comedians, with favorites being Morcambe & Wise and The Two Ronnies.

Mum cared for Dad for years, for as long as she was able. He was lucky enough to spend his last 6+ years at the Royal Star & Garter Home, in Surbiton. There are no words to express our gratitude to the outstanding and devoted staff there. We were truly moved by their care of Dad throughout and the sympathy shown to Mum and our family as Dad was taken ill in these last few weeks. They honoured our wishes to keep him in the home until the end. They would all call out to him as they passed his room and have told us he was a well-loved member of that community.

We will all miss Dad's unwavering sense of humour – but most of all, **MOST OF ALL**, he had a shining, undaunted, positivity and cheerfulness. Despite all he went through in his life, he never forgot that there will always be someone worse off.

Neither of my two sisters nor I, ever, ever heard a word of self-pity from our Dad.

That's not a bad role model to have had.

So, from the three of us, thanks for that one Dad.