

Alison Channer Dodds eulogy at the funeral service of Dick Channer in Holy Trinity Church, West Hill – London. February 23, 2021

In September 2018, I was driving my parents home from their holiday, when Dad - apropos of nothing - said, I'm going to send an email to God and tell him 'I'm tired of this life and want to come home'. In the silence I looked at Mum in the rear view mirror, and all I could think of saying was – *Perhaps you should add a P.S. Dad - 'As I have spent my whole life listening to you, maybe it is your turn to listen to me?'*

His passing only last month, a day before his and Mum's 69th Wedding anniversary, just confirms that everything happens in God's time, and not ours.

Dad was born in India, in the city of Quetta, (now in Pakistan), on Christmas Day in 1921. His father was a Major General in the army and was serving in India. After a childhood growing up in an area of rocky outcrops and high mountain passes, Dad was packed off to boarding school at Wellington College in **Berkshire**, and his younger brother David joined him there. Holidays were spent in the UK, with relatives or family friends.

He enlisted in the Army as soon as he could, cycling several miles through the countryside to do so, while his parents were still overseas. His distant formal relationship with his parents, who signed their letters 'George & Folly', instead of 'Dad & Mum', was to have a lasting impact on his family relationships in the future.

After the war and having left the army, he met and married Mum in America in 1952 during their work with MRA, and they decided to continue this work together, without salary.

I was born several years later while they were still in America, when they were provided with a home by the Close family in Connecticut. Having a small child didn't hinder their work, and years later while I was left at school in Switzerland at the age of 5, they spent the next 3 years travelling with musical reviews, spending time in various countries around the world, living out of a suitcase. This included a long period in India, where Dad helped launch a newspaper called Himmat, with Rajmohan Ghandi.

We finally had a permanent home in Putney, just across the road from this Church, living with Dad's parents. Mum and Dad continued their work based at the Westminster Theatre in London, where Mum appeared in many of the productions, and Dad was Joint Secretary of the Friends of the Theatre.

In his late 80's, he began travelling regularly to Albania, to investigate ancestral family roots. Meeting local families he continued his reconciliation work during these visits, and strong friendships were built - correspondence with those families continues to this day.

As this wasn't a job you retired from, and he was always 'on duty', Dad has left a lasting legacy wherever, and with whoever he met. Nearly all the wonderful messages we have received in the last few weeks, have talked about Dad's '**great sense of humour**' - which has caused Mum and I to exchange many a look of surprise – not a quality we naturally associate with him

Here are some lasting memories I have of Dad

- The smell of Evostick always reminds me of him (as do Mothballs which he would put everywhere) – Doing carpentry together, learning how to drill holes by hand, watching him make the furniture for my bedroom which is still being used.
- Dad's dedication and **110% effort** to the job in hand, is illustrated in the day he was supposed to collect my son Christopher after school. I

received a desperate call from his teacher saying he was still waiting, 40 minutes after everyone else had gone home. After making several calls trying to track him down, Mum's neighbour kindly drove up to **this** Church (where Dad was volunteering as the Verger), and found him fully engaged up a ladder, in the second task he had planned for the day, completely forgetting the most crucial one - picking up his grandson!

- Magic was probably Dad's only hobby, apart from reading. There were always tricks in his pocket when he was visiting people, and he never missed an opportunity to perform - sometimes more successfully than others.....he once casually lent on the fire surround in our living room while during a trick, which then promptly collapsed - much to everyone's amusement – except mine!
- Dad's participation in conversations with the family, always began with a loud '**WHAT?**.....followed from us by 'you haven't got your hearing aids in have you Dad?'his reply, with an embarrassed smile, was always 'I am saving the batteries for a **special** occasion'! and you can probably imagine how we responded to that!
- Driving long distances, either to Cornwall on holiday, or to Mum's parents in Cheshire, Dad would instigate a game Pelmanism - composing a sentence from the number plate of the car in front, to while away the time – something I still do to memorise things, and something Ken and I did on car journey's with the boys.
- Dad's love of dogs probably began during his early days in India, but his 'dog sitting' was not always successful. He looked after my two large Weimaraners once and took them to June Bowerman's home in Kent where he was visiting. He put them in the garden studio over night, but as they barked constantly and so loudly he ended up going to sleep with **them**, to stop them further disturbing the neighbours! When my parents took care of our rescue dog overnight, her first walk from their home ended in near disaster. Dad lost her in the park, and eventually

found someone with a mobile phone so he could call Mum. 'I've lost Cassie, can you come and help me find her?' When Mum went down to the front door to go and join him, **she** found Cassie sitting on the doorstep!

- Dad's recall for names, dates, points in history were incredible, and once he was into a story there was no stopping him – often with far too many layers of information, I might add. Nevertheless, his memory was very impressive, and his story telling was a much admired quality, and for some is legendary.
- His military background meant he was very **orderly**. His home office was immaculate – shelves and drawers divided up to house very specific items, of files and stationery. He loved **sticky labels** with his name and address on them, and these were stuck on anything that moved, to ensure his property was returned to him if it ever got mislaid or lent to someone - there is even one on the bottom of the bamboo cross (POINT TO CROSS)
- He continued going to the MRA Centre in Victoria 2 or 3 times a week into his 90's where he would write letters, photocopy articles and photographs and send them to various people. The poem 'FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND', and the sculpture 'HAND OF GOD' by Lorenzo Quinn were the two favourite things he would send to give them inspiration.

As Peter has already said, Dad's family connection with India goes back generations. His Great Grandfather, another soldier in the family, was wounded in a village in Nagaland in 1879 and friendships with the Nagas have continued through the generations. This is the mountainous area in India where Dad fought against the Japanese. On one of his trips to the area he brought back 2 Naga spears, over 6ft long, with sharp steel points – something you would never get through airport security now! The Naga shawl over the coffin, was given to me by Visier & Sano who stayed with us in our home

many years ago, and it was also Vizier who brought the lengths of Bamboo from the jungle for Dad, so he could make the crosses Peter spoke of.

Having lead a very healthy life, doing karate, yoga and taking daily 2 mile walks at a very brisk pace until he was about 90, ill health caught up with him in 2014. The last few years were not kind and Mum will agree he wasn't a particularly good patient! After years of restraint and discipline he took to 'cussing' – '**Oh B H**' was his favourite – at full volume, much to the family's amusement! He spent his last years in The Pines Nursing Home, a short walk from here..... where he was cared for by an amazing team – (B R E A T H E) our deepest thanks go to Heather, the Manager, and all the wonderful staff there.

(B R E A T H E)

I will **forever** be proud of Dad. His achievements and the faithfulness he showed to the decision he made after the war. He truly was a Soldier of God. A phrase by Hans Christian Anderson he used comes to mind: 'Every person's life is an adventure, a fairy tale written by the finger of God'.

I will close with a Pelmanism, based around **R I C H A R D (SAY THE NAME NOT LETTERS)**

Raconteur

Illusionist

Caring Husband

Absolutely

Rock-solid

Dedication

