

Church

Many of you will know that my brother Michael is in prison. We did everything that we thought was humanly possible to get him here today, but unfortunately the Prison Service would not allow it, so I am going to read his tribute here and then my own in the crematorium later, where we will be joined by Sarah and the Grandchildren. I spoke to him yesterday and he said to say to all the family that he's fine, obviously very upset that he cannot be here today. He also asked to be remembered to all those who remember him at the cricket club and to say thank you to all those who have helped me today with the arrangements.

So this is what Mike said in his own words.

Our Dad was a man of many talents.

He was a Father, a Husband, a Grandad, a very good Cricketer, county standard table tennis player, a Company Director, Shop Steward, Military Policeman attached to Changi Prison in Singapore, a Vice President and first Life Member of his beloved Orpington Cricket Club, a drinking partner to many and a man of wisdom to the few.

My Dad was not a perfect human being – none of us are – but he was strong, fearless, diplomatic, courageous and above all funny!! Kelly said to me recently when he was taken into hospital that we needn't worry about him 'because he has had more comebacks than Frank Sinatra'.

He had a wicked sense of humour exercised in the knowledge that we are made to laugh, live and be happy where we can be. It was this sense of humour that was infectious to all who met and he was always a popular man despite living a life which, at times – could be described as tragic. He was the middle child of Ethel and Eddie – his younger sister, our Auntie Denise died when she was six years old and he spent a considerable amount of his early years looking after her. His older brother, our much loved Uncle David, died at the tragically early age of 43 some thirty years ago. He never really got over their loss. He took sanctuary here in this church as a boy, where he was a chorister for years, until he was caught playing cricket out the back using the gravestones as a wicket. He particularly asked for this service to take place here given the many happy hours he spent.

His best friend in childhood was a scrawny lad called Davy Jones from Beckenham – although he was ten years younger, their Mums were best friends and they used to play together in the orchards at the bottom of our Grandad's garden – always getting into mischief and being told off for something they had done wrong. How ironic to discover that Davy was to morph some years later into David Bowie – we used to kid him often that he was the inspiration for Aladdin Sane!!

During the war, he was evacuated to Otford in Kent, where he was to witness some pretty awful scenes during a very difficult time and was shot at by a low flying Messerschmitt when he was only eight years old. It was very difficult always to get any detail out of him, but war obviously had a major effect on him as he signed up for the RAF in his teenage years and was sent to Singapore.

Just prior to this, he had met Mum – predictably on a cricket field!! She was the first Miss Bromley, and he was bowled over by her (if you'll pardon the pun). He was also welcomed into a big happy family and forged friendships with her four brothers and sisters that have lasted a lifetime. Kelly was born in 1963, by co-incidence in the same room in the local maternity hospital that he was born in 26 years previously. I came along in 1966.

We were a very happy family - holidays were spent in Bournemouth, bank holidays always meant a family outing to Leicester Square to see a film and have dinner in a local steak house. Dad was a real James Bond fan so we saw every premiere – his favourite being *The Spy Who Loved Me* – mostly for Barbara Bach we suspected over the years to come. The theme tune - *Nobody Does it Better* - was Mum's favourite song and a favourite memory is of Kel – standing in the dining room with a hairbrush for a microphone pretending to be Carly Simon. This was before she became Kate Bush of course!! Dad and I used to crash in and make her go very red!!

In his working life, Dad achieved great things. He was a huge champion of equality and as Shop Steward at Sainsburys drove some pioneering legislation for women's rights in the workplace and also for members of the travelling community who were taken on as temporary workers there. He later became Head of Distribution for Coca Cola based in Sidcup. However it did mean that over the years, we drank a huge amount of the stuff at Christmas, Parties and Holidays.

Only recently has Kel told me she's started drinking it again!! As a Company Director, he managed his own soft drinks firm based in Canterbury. It was no co-incidence that the County Cricket Ground was ten minutes away and that his sponsorship packages generally involved a marquee and full hospitality. Then there were the mock presentations that he would make Kel and I sit through when he would put up a white board and easel and we would pretend to be his co-directors and make comments on his long term distribution techniques for the South East. Kel predictably followed him into marketing and PR – I couldn't get away fast enough!!

After his private sector career, he worked for the Metropolitan Police. He loved the concept of putting something back, but hated the bureaucracy, the systems and processes and the culture which he found overbearing and quite prejudiced. But he got on well with Assistant Commissioner Alan Fry – as he was then – and often was late back from lunch, as he discussed test match tactics with 'The Governor'.

I was obviously very sad that I couldn't spend more time with him in recent years. Nevertheless we spoke on the telephone every week and when I first got sent to prison, he used to visit me regularly. He was always very positive, and upbeat, and was a huge support to me in a way that I found completely overwhelming – especially when I really needed his help with practical matters. I will miss him more than I can ever say. There is a saying 'God unites those we have loved' and I hope that he is now happy with our Mum and that one day, we will be united too. In the meantime, I give my heartfelt thanks to a man who always and without prejudice supported me against all the odds.

Crematorium

I want to start by saying thank you to everybody for coming today, for your cards, text messages, emails, little acts of kindness from individuals, that have helped me to get through the past few weeks. The day that Dad died actually became a very special day – standing on the cricket field with the team saying a prayer for his passing, seeing the boys all wearing black armbands for him, was more of a comfort than you'll ever know. And the fact that Stockbridge blew the electronics in the scoreboard would have rendered my Dad speechless with tears. A club legend mourning a club legend in the only way he knew how!!!

It is no secret that my Dad and I were very close. Mum always used to say we were attached at the hip!! One of my earliest memories is of an outing when I was about three. He was taking me on the train to Orpington (of all places). I wore a little red knitted dress, with white swans around the bottom – my Auntie Doreen will remember – she always said it was her favourite. Anyway Mum had bought me a special pair of red buckle shoes and a red plastic handbag. We set off – the journey went well and we got off Crofton side and were walking down by the railings. Then I realised, I'd left my handbag on the train. Dad shouted at me not to move and ran off down under the tunnels to where the train was on the far side. After what seemed like an eternity – he came back grinning holding up the bag. At that moment, I decided I had the best Daddy in the world and nothing would ever change that!!

Saturdays were always about 'going to cricket'. We would get up in the morning, have breakfast and then talk about the game, the opposition, the team, the ground and then we would get ready to go. He taught me to score, how to play a cover drive (not that there was ever much evidence of him playing one), but we did spend an awfully long time on forward defensive strokes!. He always used to say that if a game was rained off, you wouldn't want to be anywhere near his daughter. Those who know me well would say I'm still the same today!! Sunday mornings in our house were always a bit of a war zone. Dad's cricket bag would be in the garden – bat and pads flung out of a top window, box in the hedge etc. Mike would say 'what's the old man done now? As the oldest, I was sent to find out. Memorable escapades included walking up a brand new concrete path after my Grandad and Uncles had finished laying it - with footprints all the way through, on another occasion using Mum's walk in wardrobe as an en suite bathroom. You can imagine the state of her evening collection!!

Surprisingly, or maybe not if you knew him and therefore understood that it was more about crease time than run rate, he only ever scored one hundred – 128 not out. Thankfully I was there to witness it. I was seven years old and it was in the middle of the 1970 World Cup. We were playing over at LESSA (London Electricity). I had a hard choice that day. England were playing West Germany the game where Peter Bonetti had a nightmare, and I was sitting next to Michael Hemple at the time. Anyway I decided to go outside and watch my Dad!! I forgot to remind Michael of this when he sat next to me in the hospital the day before Dad died having dropped everything to come and have coffee with me in case it was bad news. I'll never forget either moment!!

He took great pleasure in me discussing tactics etc with his friends, especially work colleagues who found it amazing that a woman would know so much about cricket! Later when he retired he became a member of Surrey, not for any other reason than my office was about ten minutes from The Oval and I could bunk off early to watch the last session with him. We also always used to go to the first day of the Lords Test – where he would parade a stupid grin for the best part of the day and talk about dying happy. It seems very strange to still see his name on the Fantasy League teams being distributed weekly but at least at the moment, he's not beating me, so that's ok!!

My Auntie Val wrote in her sympathy card that my Dad would probably be vying to open the batting in Heaven's Eleven. That got me thinking – there's quite a team there now. Frank Hemple, Eric Cox, Dad's great mate Terry Markell, Geoff Davis, Brian Atkinson, Bob Moffat, Ron Pearce and Ernie Clarke shouting 'Telegraph' to anyone in the vicinity. We've loved them all. And then this year our much loved Sybil Hemple passed away. There are only three funerals that my Dad could not bear to attend in all the time that I knew him - Mum's brother – our much loved Uncle Boysie, Terry and Sybil. That says it all really.

He had many Terry Markell stories. Whenever he saw Neil he threatened to tell him all about them but I don't think Neil ever wanted to know! They were like a couple of naughty schoolboys together, but the best of all was at Alan and Daphne Cornish's 25th Wedding Anniversary dinner when Dad introduced my sister-in-law to Terry as his new wife. Sarah was sitting looking totally gorgeous with a nameplate in front of her Mrs S Hora. You should have seen Terry's face! Priceless. On the day that Dad died, Neil came over to give me a big hug and as we stood on the boundary watching the end of the game, he turned to me and said, 'our lives are wrapped up here Kel'. It was a very touching moment.

You boys going on tour this year have no idea about tour pranks. This lot wrote the book. My Dad and Terry changed all the local road signs in Monmouth villages one year, but forgot how they started and ended up having to sleep in the car!! They hung poor Bob from a doorframe as he had a dodgy back and I can't remember what they did to Hilton's bed but it involved compensation to the hotel proprietor I believe.

He was also incredibly fond of Paul Hemple. He always said everyone should play cricket the way that Paul played and said that he was the best Captain he ever played under (and that included Eric Cox). He loved the regular games at Limpsfield Chart every summer and particularly enjoyed seeing Paul carry on playing – often saying he wished he could have done the same. I also want to pay tribute to Keith Stockbridge who knew my Dad for over thirty years. He and Dad got on so well – he used to regularly abuse Keith both in public and private, but in all honesty, he thought he was a lovely bloke and was genuinely so pleased to see him one day at the hospital – where they chatted about his illness. Keith always asked after him and showed genuine concern whenever he had a bit of a blip with illness. He was also the person I dreaded telling most at the club because I knew how much it would upset him.

But it wasn't only cricket that we had in common. He loved music – in all forms. We used to endure huge debates about which was the greatest group ever – always The Who for him, and we would always discuss the greatest track ever - Won't Get Fooled Again was his favourite, versus the Style Council Walls Come Tumbling Down for me. He became an avid viewer of MTV in his final days and would have been really miffed to have missed Beyonce at Glastonbury this year! Madonna and Elton John were big favourites and he thought the Arctic Monkeys were just sublime. He knew the words to just about every Beatles song ever and another favourite pastime for us was to decide which of their songs was the best.

Years ago, he and Mum used to go to the Playboy club in London regularly. One particular night he went to settle the bill at the central desk, when George Michael was in front of him surrounded by a bevy of beauties all fawning over him. Dad just turned to George and said 'you'll have to forgive me mate – this happens wherever I go, just have to get used to it'. George obviously thought this hilarious as ten minutes later he was on the phone to me saying your Dad's a right laugh. Can you imagine – 14 years old on the phone to George Michael. I nearly died of embarrassment.

When he came out of hospital a few years ago, I took him for a pub lunch in Eynsford – a fantastic hot summer day and we were in my convertible sports car with the top down and The Who's Greatest Hits blaring out. We sang See Me, Feel Me at the tops of our voices – each trying to outdo the other to get the chorus in as it's quite hard and repetitive. He won hands down!!

Breakaway – the music that we entered the Chapel to, was the title of an album that was very special to us both. Benny Gallagher and Graham Lyle and their wives were great friends of Mum and Dad and I used to babysit for their kids. Breakaway was recorded in the seventies and Dad and I used to go into the studio to listen to the tracks being laid down. We used to play the album on every family holiday – still do.

We had little family quirks as all families do. A lifelong love of fish and chips – always Dad's answer to any crisis. It was his favourite meal, even at cricket – as you will all recall, but also at home with Mum and particularly on any family holiday. A phone call after England won at anything – football, cricket, rugby to sing a chorus of the Dambusters down the line. When England won the rugby World Cup, Doug and I were in France and put him on speaker phone. We had some very confused French people who were quite convinced that the English were mad. He was the most competitive participant in a game of Trivial Pursuits ever - as most of the family will testify. And Monopoly often came to blows or the board would be thrown up into the air.

As a Grandad, he took great pleasure in his alter ego Grandad Fish. Mary never quite mastered Chris when she was a baby so Fish he became and after a while it caught on and we all called him that. He loved nothing better than to be surrounded by the Grandchildren, particularly at Christmas where our Christmas Eve dinners at Don Giovannis were fabulous. Joe was always described as the Chief Executive of Tescos, building experience before becoming Prime Minister. Nicola made him so proud when she presented us with little Harry just before last Christmas and made him a Great Grandfather – or 'older brother' as he always described himself. Jamie had a great relationship with him, evidenced recently by his apparent determination to miss one of Auntie Kel's legendary family dinners. Having rung him up and put on the worst ever 'snotty' voice to feign illness, he was heard to recover rapidly and say 'cheers Grandad', cos Dad had sussed him immediately and wished him a good time with his mates.

As a brother-in-law, he took great delight in family gatherings. I stand before you as a bit of a fraud. My Uncles and Aunts here today knew him a lot longer than I did. In fact over sixty years in some instances. He and my Uncle Buster used to argue over who had the greater portion of chips at my Nans when they were teenagers and I'm sorry to tell you that I witnessed the same argument last year nearly sixty years on. Even after Mum and Dad divorced, they all continued to be best friends and I can't thank them enough for all that they did for him over the last few years. To Doug, to Sarah and to Mum's partner John – I also want to say thank you for helping him way beyond what he could have expected. I know how grateful he was to you all, especially to Sarah who gave him his Grandchildren and ensured that they would always be a major part of his life, despite the difficulties with Michael.

He was a very surprising man. A natural challenger of authority, lifelong donator to the Salvation Army, he didn't measure value in material possessions, but always instilled in Michael and I the importance of people. He always said that what mattered was what was in here and here. He could talk to anybody regardless of status, wealth, class, race, gender and could generally find something to laugh about with all that he came into contact with. Deep down he was a very loyal man – evidenced by his support to Michael and his reaction when our cousin Nick came out as a gay man. Dad called me up to ask what he should do to show support and loyalty as he didn't know how to handle it but was very clear that this was his nephew and he needed to . This from the man who previously had told me that every boyfriend I ever had was gay!

We all know how he fought his illness with gusto. Those who were present at the OCC Reunion Dinner will recall how desperately ill he was and how we only managed to get him there by my Uncle negotiating an exit pass from the hospital and copious amounts of morphine. He had no recollection of that night even though he made it for a couple of hours, but we all thought the end was nigh. So the fact that he soldiered on for so long is a testament I am sure to the many friends and family members who willed him through – and his beloved Orpington Cricket Club that gave him an interest and focus for his remaining time. Every major club occasion was followed by dissection immediately afterwards of who had spoken to him, the topic of conversation, and he could never get over how many people came to have a chat with him and a laugh.

And finally, I want to say one thing to you all – on a day like today, it's not the big things that you remember – it's the little things – the Dad that was always there to pick me up when I fell over as a kid and continued to do so well into adult life, - the Dad who drove one Saturday afternoon to Bexleyheath, Orpington, Bromley and then Croydon to get me the latest Abba album on the day it was released, - the Dad who would always ferry me around when I was a teenager and stand at the back of Genesis concerts loving the live music, - the dad who turned to me on my wedding day and told me I looked 'as pretty as a picture' and then said the same thing recently when I visited him in hospital. The Dad who always bought me champagne because he said I had far too much stress to deal with and whilst he couldn't do anything about that, the champagne would always make me feel better.

We all know that this was a good man, a kind man, a very very funny man. I take huge comfort that the very last words he spoke to me was to tell me that he loved me millions.

In fact, today, I may be much older, but I want to say - up here are the memories, but in here there's still that little girl who simply thinks her Daddy was the best Daddy in the world.