

Tribute to Dad – Frank Collins – 25th November 2008

I would like to share with you some of the many fond memories that I have of Dad from the 60 years that I knew him.

He achieved so much. I always admired his business skill, nerve and sheer hard work. He put so much effort into making all his various ventures a success. He would work endless hours to achieve his goals.

No problem was insurmountable to him; he would use his foresight and ingenuity to overcome any obstruction that would come his way. I can illustrate my point with a couple of stories:

My first example: His first grocery shop at Ash was a great success, due partly to his specialising in selling dried fruit etc in special packets which were sealed with a label saying “Untouched by Human Hand”. What his happy customers did not realise was the fact that these packets were being filled, in the back room, by my Brother and I, using our finger licked bare hands. If only the customers had known!

Dad eventually sold the grocery shop at Ash and the family moved into a bungalow at Mytchett from where he tried his hand at various ventures. Now my second example of his ingenuity: He ran a successful grocery delivery business supplying numerous retail outlets. As was his norm, he would never let any of his customers down. His business relied on petrol for his van, but unfortunately a fuel crisis was looming with petrol rationing imminent. So what did Dad do to keep his vehicle on the road? Well, he stored 100's of gallons of petrol, in various dubious containers in the shed and garage in the garden of our bungalow. So whilst the remainder of the county was at a standstill, dad was driving around making his normal deliveries. Pure genius and ingenuity!

Whilst at Mytchett, Dad rekindled his dormant sailing dream by building, with his own bare hands, a wooden sailing boat. This was the start of a sailing hobby that would continue for the remainder of his life. I feel sure that Dad must have felt very proud of the lovely boat that he had built, which was no mean achievement.

We moved from Mytchett to Frimley Green Stores, over which we lived. This was another extremely successful business venture which Dad eventually developed into a complex of three separate shops. It was at Frimley Green that Dad introduced me to one of his customers, a very senior engineer from the BBC in London. Hence the start of my exciting BBC Television career and consequently the start of my sons broadcast careers. One of Dads Grandsons is also working in the broadcast industry. So all these careers were due to a conversation that Dad had with one of his customers! To enable the development of Frimley Green Stores, Dad had our lovely family house, “Lake House” built. We all have fond memories of living there, as we were one big family together.

The Frimley Green businesses were eventually sold to enable Dad to spend time developing other business ventures. These ventures were an Off Licence in Frimley and a Dry Cleaning and Launderette in Camberley. As per norm, all the businesses were a great success. My shift work enabled me to frequently visit Dad at his Off Licence where I was always plied with a glass of sherry or three. The remainder of the day was always a bit of a blur..... wonderful!

Mum and Dad decided to retire to Poole, where you would have thought that Dad may have slowed down a bit, but no, to the contrary. He purchased a large motor boat for his fishing trip business; opened a boat chandlers shop; developed a complex of apartments to let; built a classroom in the garden where he ran Ship Radio VHF courses; he passed his Royal Yachting Association, Yacht master Instructor exams and he actively perused his hobby as a Radio Armature, communicating to yachts and fellow Radio Armatures all over the World.

Eventually he wound down most of his businesses and concentrated on his sailing hobby. He frequently and meticulously organised sailing trips to France accompanied by his sailing mates. These "mates" became very good friends and stayed with him to the very end. I know just how much he appreciated their help and friendship.

So even during retirement, Dad achieved more than most of us will achieve in a lifetime.

I have very fond memories of visiting Dad whilst he was at Poole; notably, the lovely sailing trips and latterly the trips in his motor launch within Poole Harbour. I shall never forget his hospitality during the annual Pantomime party held at the house; how can we ever forget his potent punch drink that he plied us with. Christmases will never be the same.

One of the things he taught me, from a very early age, was the value of money. He said never to buy anything that you could not afford. He was very anti any form of credit and I remember him refusing to let me take out a Hire Purchase agreement to purchase my first motor bike.

He was a very hard working man who appreciated his family and friends to the end. We all miss him very much.

Thank you Dad for everything.