

FRANK COLLINS

Frank was born on the 19th of March 1923 on Winnersh Farm, which is between Reading and Wokingham. As a boy, he used to help on the farm. Eventually the family moved to Three Mile cross at reading, where Frank attended Grazely Council School. Much to the surprise of his parents, he did rather well at school, and even played for the school team. Later on he went to reading Collegiate College, renowned for its 'sound commercial education' – an emphasis which would stand him in good stead for the future. He did very well there. But at 15 he was presented with a choice: whether to take a job or to stay on at school. Frank opted to work, and became a junior clerk for a large wholesale meat company. Then came the war, with Frank aged just 16, he stayed on at the meat company, as it was important that companies like that should continue for the war effort. He stayed there until 1941, when he joined the RAF at just 18. He became a wireless operator. Sad to say, many of his contemporaries didn't survive. In the summer of 1942 he was on training at Blackpool. He attended a dance at the famous Blackpool Tower ballroom, where he first set his eyes on Barbara, who was serving in the ATS. They fell in love. Unfortunately the war kept them apart, but they married on November 6, 1943, 65 years ago, at St Mary's reading, with a honeymoon to follow in Torquay. Frank had to go back to serve and was involved in the mobile signals unit as they trained and prepared for D-Day. This brought him into contact with some fellow soldiers who became household names – the likes of Eric Sykes, Dennis Norden and Bill Fraser. As you all know, Frank loved sailing, but I bet most of you don't know where or how he learnt to sail? It was in fact by German prisoners-of-war, and his first trip in a sailing boat was with a Luftwaffe officer instructor. Frank always said, 'The sailing bug never left me'.

After the war, they set up home in Reading, and David was born in 1946. Frank resumed his work with the meat wholesaler, and then in 1948 Stephen was born. Frank decided to leave the meat company. In the event, he went into partnerships with his father in a grocery business, a village grocers, where his creative and social skills were put to good use. In March, 1954, Hilary was

born. He was getting more and more interested in business, and bought various businesses, including shops, dry cleaners, launderettes; he had a real flair for building them up; a natural entrepreneur. Then along came Rosie, in 1962. Frank was doing well, and had a house built at Frimley Green.

It was to Poole that he and Barbara moved for their 'retirement' though Frank was such an active man, it was hardly that. Here, he continued his love of sailing, obtaining his Yachtmaster Instruction certificate. He still couldn't get rid of the business bug, and bought a business in Parkstone, Harbour Chandlers. He was also able to focus on amateur radio, and he was a keen radio ham. He loved to go out on the sea, sailing and fishing. He also was involved in buying and doing up holiday flats – another side of his entrepreneurial nature. Eventually in 1997, he said enough was enough and retired, shall we say, properly.

Of course, in talking about his career, we must not forget the most important thing in his life was his family: his lovely wife Barbara, his children, nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

In short, he was a much respected and admired man, who had a real flair for business, served his country with distinction, absolutely adored sailing, but above all loved his family to bits.