

EULOGY TO PATRICK RANKIN ~ by Annabelle Rankin

Hello everyone. Greetings, and thank you very much for coming. Trying to sum up my father's character is not easy because, like all of us he had many contradictory qualities . He was astute, kind, humorous, positive and energetic, yet he could be stubborn, outspoken and impatient (which he admitted to). He was an extremely supportive and consistent figure in many people's lives, always wanting them (especially the young) to achieve their best, yet never interfering with their decision-making. He gained the respect of his contemporaries by being charming, honest and forthright. Although his terseness is legendary, distance inevitably lends enchantment, and Patrick can't be usefully 'plagiarized', so to speak, as he had a deep-rooted integrity & strength of character uncommon today.

He was a traditionalist and conservative thinker yet at the same time was very willing to make changes and master new technology. Always decisive, he has diversified at Little Hall Farm in extremely enterprising ways over the last 15 - 20 years. It's hard to believe that he is gone and won't again be telling us about his latest projects or, with the well-known twinkle in his eye, teasing us about something or other.

It is Jamie's, Hetta's and my great good fortune that he married our mother Alicia in 1953. In fact the first years of their married life and our lives were spent living at Waldens, then newly-rebuilt, very near here. On April 1, 1960, we moved to Little Stambridge Hall, which was for my father 'moving back home' since he had lived there as a child with his parents, Donald and Connie, and his brother, Motty. Throughout his life he persisted in referring to places there with the names he knew as a child, so we have an iris bed in the garden that is planted with shrubs, and a sitting-room that everyone else calls the drawing-room.

From life in the 1960's, 70's and '80's we have many very happy memories of holidays and Christmases together, parties and dinner parties, and of our times spent down by the river, swimming and water-skiing, and visiting Grandpa and Stella at 'Broomhills' or Motty and Alex and our cousins at Hampton Barns.

Apart from his sartorial elegance – he was always beautifully 'turned out', Two obviously important strands of my father's life stand out: his working life and his love of sport.

After Motty died, I asked him to tell me what he considered his most memorable times. Instead of telling me about his years in the army, his training in milling in the midlands whilst courting my mother, or even his

treasured years at Eton, he said that the thing that most stuck out for him was winning the sports cup at his prep school, Sunningdale, when he was eleven.

Of Sunningdale he also said he remembered seeing Crystal Palace burning in the distance and, most impressively, that once when he was on the playing fields with his friends, his father flew over & dive-bombed the boys in his plane. In those days you could fly anywhere.

Sports-wise, Patrick boxed in his youth, and played a great deal of cricket including in the Eton eleven, and subsequently for the Eton rambles and the Gents of Essex. As president of Rankins Cricket Club he gave generously to support the recent development of a second pitch and a renovated and extended pavilion. He was an excellent self-taught golfer who had a very low handicap for many years, and he was a member of Thorndon Park and Royal St. Georges most of his life. He was a popular president of the London Corn Exchange Golfing Society for 11 years. He loved golfing with his son-in-law and grandsons and only stopped playing altogether about 2 years ago.

He also rode a great deal in childhood, beginning with compulsory morning rides with the groom (which at the time he resented), and extending to years of hacking and hunting with his wife and daughter. An extremely accomplished rider himself, he especially loved supporting Hetta when she competed as Alicia does today in events all over the country. He enjoyed shooting mostly for the love of taking his dog out.

Workwise, Patrick had a marvelous ethic of persistence and undauntedness in the face of change or adversity. After Stambridge Mill was sold in 1961, he joined Allied Mills. He ran a feed mill at Coxtie Green for a number of years, which he loved, before going to the London office to take the helm of the wheat-buying policy for the group. This appealed to his quiet love of risk-taking.

During the 1970's, he gained a reputation for being 'cool' in the you-can't-read-me sense, and was called 'the ice cool man' in the office (and by us) after a Christmas party when the directors all had humorous hats made for them by the staff and Patrick's was one of an imitation block of ice.

On another occasion, Christmas party again, he happily gambled with this moniker by wearing a ridiculous long, blonde wig for charity whilst walking from his train in Fenchurch Street to his office above the Corn Exchange in Mark Lane. Always adept at pulling other people's legs, his stylish, unpretentious personality could see the joke when it was on him. A great example for us!

He was instrumental in setting up Allied Grain in the late 80's, which has since gone on to become part of Frontier Agriculture, one of the largest agricultural merchants in the U.K. He retired from London in his early sixties to give him the time to play more golf, which of course he did as it was his abiding passion, but was thereafter very happily occupied by the farm and, for a few years, in a part-time role for a dog food manufacturer.

Not a lot of people know this, but he was also naturally very musical and could play the piano by ear. He never learned to read music - a couple of early attempts failed. He loved listening to the old time crooners of the thirties such as Hutch and the Inkspots, and was even spotted at an opera or two.

Being here today reminds me of a story about my father from years ago. He and my mother were in this very church and, I believe, it was the Rev. Wilkes conducting the service. During the sermon the vicar was preaching about Lazarus being raised from the tomb and he said, 'He was dead, you know, stone dead... not in a trance like most of the congregation here today.' On the way out after the service, my mother turned to my father and said, 'It was good that bit wasn't it, about Lazarus?' to which my father replied, 'what bit?'

In recent years as a family we have travelled together, including a fabulous trip up the Nile in our own boat which Jamie arranged to celebrate Patrick's 80th birthday.

However from 2006 he had a pacemaker fitted, and from 2008 he suffered from chronic kidney disease. These ailments made him very breathless, and since Christmas we had all been aware that he was here only by the grace of God. In fact I once said to him that God has been very gracious to him and he did not quite hear me and asked, 'who has been very gracious to me?'

In August he unwisely undertook a long car journey from which he never recovered and from around the 9th August he was bed-ridden. The last three weeks of his life were spent in hospital. During one of my last times visiting him I talked to him about his situation, pointing out that neither he nor the medical professionals could make him completely better.

I urged him to look outside himself for faith, hope and healing. I reminded him that Jesus died for sinners (that's all of us) and saves those who trust in him alone from their naturally sinful state. Jesus himself told us that his kingdom is not of this world yet also said that the kingdom of God was 'at hand' when he walked the earth. In other words, 'He' is 'it'. I recalled for my father that that was what the miracles were all about, including the raising of Lazarus. The bible assures us there's going to be a new heaven and a new

Earth; and then we shall be together forever. I had previously shared the gospel in similar ways over the past few years and feared he only half-listened or waved me away. This time he really listened and said, 'thanks for that.'

We cannot imagine heaven or eternal life. As St. Paul says in his letters to the Corinthians - people who were so like us, who think they know best all the time! - 'no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor human mind conceived the things god has destined for us', and 'we walk by faith and not by sight' knowing that 'to be absent from the body is to be present with the lord.'

I pray that we all meet again in God's glory and I for one cannot wait to be reunited with my beloved father.