

On behalf of mum and the family, we would like to thank you for coming and joining us in saying goodbye to dad.

It was suggested that I say something about dad, probably because I'm the oldest and I'm proud and pleased to do so, though I must say that my first thought was to run a mile, however here goes.

I don't know very much about his life as a boy, suffice to say that being the middle child of 9 and the youngest boy he was probably able to get away with more than I was ever allowed to. My earliest memory of him was at Bamford Road, somewhat over 40 years ago, we were visiting our next door neighbours, the Youngs and I challenged him to a race back home. I ran down the garden path to the gate, in through our gate and up our garden path, he never got near me during the race. However when I reached our door, there he was sat on the doorstep with a great big smile on his face and probably relaxing with a woodbine. It didn't take me long to realise that he had simply stepped over the garden wall that separated the two gardens. I never raced him again. Years later I taught him to play chess, at this stage I was chess champion of Kingsbrook school, within a very short while he was able to beat me at my own game. I never played chess with him again either. Which is a shame because he never had much time for us children as we were growing up, he was forever working. I can remember as a teenager seeing him come home from a shift at Britannia, dog tired, covered in dust from the grindwheel after completing all the overtime he could get, they gave the overtime to him because he said yes, he said yes because he felt he had no option, he didn't earn enough money without it.

It was a vicious circle, as we grew up the family's needs grew he therefore had to do whatever he could to earn more, things only started to get better when Lynn and I became old enough to baby sit and mum started to work. I don't remember him as very happy during those days, but I do remember him being a lot happier after I left home and got married.

When the responsibility of the daily grind of providing food for his family eased so did his manner. He told me recently, at Anne's 40th birthday party that he was very proud of his children, of our achievements and unity, but I think he had more fun with his grandchildren.

It is a cliché that grandparenting is easier than parenting, but dad's life as grandparent must have been the happiest years of his life, from Simon to his great grandson James, all have given him great joy. Not that there hasn't been a few incidents with the grandchildren, what they and my brother and sisters found was that there was always a rock we could turn

to, whatever the crisis, whatever the need, he never denied us or our children anything that was his to give. That love was repaid many times over in the joy he had with our children. He would fight our corner if need be, we only had to ask and I believe he was the only person I knew who genuinely did not care what other people thought of him.

He retired just over four years ago after nearly 40 years with one company, mum tells me that she wasn't looking forward to the retirement at all. They had never been alone together, Penelope had only been married a couple of years or so, how would they spend their time? In all my life I have never seen him happier than the years since his retirement, would that it had been longer. He laughed more, saw more - the big holiday to Florida, spent more - a new car and relaxed in a way that would have been inconceivable just a few years before and he got more gadgets than he knew what to do with.

He has gone from us all too soon, he had it hard too long, I don't remember him having a better than even break, dad would say of course that he had mum and 8 good kids and he would have meant it.

One abiding memory of him that I will cherish for the rest of my life is that of him laughing in that helpless, wheezing way, sounding just like that cartoon character Mutlee.