

DONALD GEORGE SILLENCE, 1921 - 2001

I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH ABOUT MY DAD during my early years. Throughout those World War years, it seemed that there were other more pressing issues that required his attention and they kept him away from home. But now there are so many things that come flooding naturally into my mind - especially now and since last Sunday evening.

WHEN HE CAME HOME AFTER THE WAR, for a long time I didn't know just how ill he had been or how close to death his war wounds had taken him. Yet even now, he completely fills my childhood memories with laughter and happiness - I simply do not recall any bad times - if bad times there were, and I am sure there must have been, Terry and I were always shielded from them.

WHAT DO I REMEMBER OF HIM? I remember Christmas presents - of huge toy battleships, garages, mediaeval castles and farmyards - all handcrafted and painted by him with tender loving care. I remember bicycle parts magically appearing when he came in from work with the Wessex Electricity Company - later the Southern Electricity Board. Piece by piece the parts arrived, until suddenly in one joyous moment a whole new bike was born.

I remember watching dad - with tremendous pride - playing football for Faringdon Town at Tucker Park on cold wintry Saturday afternoons. I remember Swindon Speedway and Swindon Town Football Club and so many other things that we did together, like papering wavy ceilings at 30 Coxwell Street - that was the day a few more words entered my own personal vocabulary - and now I realise just how lucky I am to have all these happy and totally unmarred memories of childhood.

AS I GREW INTO MY TEENS, I began to mix, through work, with my father's peers, most of whom would call me "young Don" - and for the first time I came to realise just how universally liked and respected he was. Sadly, I think that is something he would never come to recognise - or if he did, he would not acknowledge.

Dad always took the greatest pride in his family - and most especially my mother. He loved to have his grandchildren around him, and individually and collectively I think they gave him as much pleasure as almost anything else in his life. And throughout my life, he has always been there - his pragmatic advice was always worth listening to - but, I'm somewhat ashamed to admit, occasionally ignored with subsequent regret.

HIS LOVE OF ALL SPORTS remained and he was ever enthusiastic. He was still bowling and golfing almost to the end - our last conversation was of that afternoon's Grand Prix and of England beating Germany at football the previous evening - something that went down particularly well with him.

AND FINALLY Donald George Sillence, my old dad, was a simple man with simple tastes and I can honestly say, in all my life, I have yet to meet a happier or more contented man. He achieved happiness and contentment mostly through my mother, but also because he knew very early on in his life exactly what he wanted from life.

He soon achieved those aims and ambitions and then, because he was also the very wisest of men, he wanted no more; he just **knew** that his grass was always the greenest.

ALL THE FAMILY TAKE ENORMOUS COMFORT in the knowledge that he died a happy man and with utter certainty, I know he is now in the best place of all, but **for the rest of us who knew him, and loved him, the world will not smile as often and life will never be quite the same again.**

Roger Sillence
5th September 2001