

## George Richard Collopy 1930 - 2022

I'm going to start with some words about my father in recent weeks before looking back.

As you all know George had a very difficult last few weeks. For a few days he was suffering quite a lot but he soon had an operation to repair his hip from which he recovered amazingly well, reaching a point where he was settled and comfortable throughout his last few weeks, never in pain. He couldn't say much during this time, and in many ways he was no longer the same person, but occasionally some of his old personality came through. When I told him he had been in hospital for 2 weeks and that Mummy was missing him he said, "She'll run off with someone else." I also often reminded him that he had 3 grandchildren; each time I did this the response was, 'Marvellous.' The nurses and doctors always emphasised how polite and kind my father was throughout his stay and I saw this myself. They were sad when he died; I really feel that his kind, caring, generous personality somehow came through during this most difficult time.

So, about my father. Born in Quinn Buildings in Islington on the 14th August 1930 to his parents, Ethel and Robert, a make-ready printer, he would live in Islington for all of his life. He was the youngest of four with his siblings Non, Ted, and Rose, sadly now all departed but close throughout their lives. Soon moving to Loreburn House, Holloway, he attended Pakeman school, an interesting school where they were made to take afternoon naps - a tradition he never forgot! During the second world war he was evacuated to Upper Stratton, Swindon next to the South Marston RAF factory - you've probably all heard about how Auntie Nelly and Uncle Hubert developed such a fondness for him that they wanted to adopt but he missed his parents a lot during this time and was much happier once back at home.

After the war he went to study Music at what was then the Northern Polytechnic Institute. Always musical he even played the clarinet for us last Christmas. After this he went to work in catering, initially at Ciro's in the West End. On his first day at Ciro's he had to serve a couple their drinks on the rooftop terrace and he was particularly nervous - but he had nothing to worry about as the couple, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, were very kind to him. [You might have heard that story before! ] Eventually becoming a cocktail barman, meeting celebrities wherever he worked in the West End, creating new cocktails, he was always happy entertaining people and making drinks, always with stories to accompany them.

George tried his hand at a lot of things in his younger years. He had a clothing shop in Queen's Crescent, aptly called George Collopy, and also ran his own bar in South Kensington for a year. These endeavours weren't

financially successful but I think with my father that wasn't the goal - he clearly enjoyed the social aspect much more than the business side.

George met Betty in 1964 after telling a friend to invite some girls to one of the many parties he hosted at his flat; Betty was invited back as she was 'lively'! They were married in 1966 and, from what I've heard they had a great lifestyle, going to or hosting parties continually as well as enjoying lots of holidays abroad. [I think I hindered this when I arrived in 1971.] He worked hard at the Hendon Hall hotel, the Hilton Metropole and the Royal Over-seas League for a number of years, finally leaving in 1982. I found an article from the Royal Over-seas League Magazine on the Victoria Bar which George ran for 9 years. Referring to my father it states: ' how sad it is if you are never able to hear George as he puts the world to-right. The best meal in the world ? George has eaten it. The best book in the world ? George read it this morning. The best television programme? George watched it with one-eye as he listened with one ear to the best radio programme and drank with one hand the best cocktail ever.'

George was unemployed for a number of years in the 80s - unlike many, he had the resilience not to let this bother him - he attended art classes and Italian lessons, went swimming twice a week, took up stamp collecting with a passion, helped me with my history homework and generally enjoyed his lifestyle. My father had a real passion for the arts - he loved literature, films, music, theatre, as well as dancing in both his younger and later years. He also loved living in London throughout his life taking advantage of all it had to offer; my Sundays as a child were often trips to the British Museum or the National Gallery.

In his 60s he worked part time as an assistant in an Aviation bookshop but he really enjoyed his retirement, probably more than most. Once the grandchildren, Oliver, Sarah, and Cecily came along George loved them lots and was always happiest when we were all together, particularly on family holidays. In recent years he really enjoyed our trips to Spain, Malta, Italy and Madeira. Weekends in the UK that I booked - not so much! Last year in Devon, my father remarked of the landlord whilst he was next to us, 'He looks like a crook!' We kept our heads down for the rest of the weekend.

I think that George was always happiest in the company of friends and family; from his siblings, their children, John, Rita, David and Maureen, his friends Johnny Green and Alma, sadly no longer with us, Grace and Len, all of my mothers wider family and his grandchildren in later years.

I've been reminded in recent days of family parties where we played Trivial Pursuit and he answered not only his own but everybody else's questions

also. With my father this was very entertaining - I'd say that everybody generally seemed happier after time spent in his company.

I'd like to end with some words David Simmonds sent: Dear Uncle George, God bless his beautiful musical, fun loving heart. He rocked and he rolled and now he has moved on.