

David Goucher

Staff (1987-1996) 1936-2016

I seem to have been given some rather big shoes to try and fill. As many of you know, Dad was a great wordsmith and a rather talented orator. Please let me immediately manage expectations – I am neither of those things. In fact, whilst looking through his papers, I was half hoping that he may have written this tribute for us, just to make sure that we got it right. Alas, no such luck.

Dad was born into a mining family, in Derbyshire in 1936. He was the eldest and one of two sets of twins. His father, George, was determined that his children would enjoy a different future than going 'down the Pit' and, as such, he encouraged their hard work at the local grammar school. Dad did well and was considering a future within the teaching profession until his twin, Michael, joined up as an RAF apprentice. The lure of money for booze and cigarettes proved equally attractive to Dad, so on 21 January 1954 he too joined the RAF as an apprentice. It proved to be an environment that he thrived in and led to him being awarded a Cadetship at the RAF College, Cranwell where he would have met some of you present here today.

His first posting was to RAF Basingbourne and this was where he met Mum. They were both participating in a local amateur dramatics society and played opposite each other in *Dr in the House*. Love blossomed and led to their wedding in September 1961 – somewhat accelerated by Dad's posting to Norway and Mum not wanting to be left behind. It was a fantastic start to what became a long and very happy married life together and even now we hear so many stories of the fun and good times that they enjoyed there.

An extremely successful career then followed for Dad. I have been told that, at the time, he was the youngest to reach the rank of Wing Commander and I have it on excellent authority from one particular Marshall of the Royal Air Force that is present here today, that Dad was the best OC Admin that he ever had – fair praise indeed! He appears to have been both respected and admired by many of his colleagues for the way in which he worked, demonstrating integrity, commitment, loyalty and a sense of responsibility. All traits that he placed great store by and admired in others.

But, it wasn't all work, not by any means. Together he and Mum enjoyed postings to Kinloss, Waddington, Biggen Hill, Bruggen, Rheindahlen and many, many more. It would appear that RAF officers and their wives partied just as hard as they worked. Again, many stories have surfaced over the years of mess do's, celebrations and private house parties (which were never complete without Neil Diamond playing at high volume) and they portray a life of fun, laughter, imaginative japes (including the evening that the army representatives at Staff College carried out an attempt at a Royal Tournament Display whilst on Space Hoppers), alcohol-fuelled shenanigans/silliness that occasionally demanded more athletic ability than should have been needed at a civilised dinner, but above all was the foundation of great, life-long family friendships. I think both he and Mum would say that it was a gilded existence and one which they absolutely loved.

Along the way David, Mark and myself came along and I believe that, although we occasionally drove him to distraction, he delighted in his role as a father and used his talents to make many everyday happenings great fun and far more interesting than perhaps they should have been. Together he and Mum created, in many ways, an idyllic childhood for us as RAF stations became our playground, their protected environments providing us with the freedom and safety which would have been denied to many. Throw in tennis, skiing, swimming and golf and you can see why we would have not only enjoyed our upbringing but why we have kept on returning for activity-filled weekends or family holidays right up until Dad became too poorly to continue.

But back to the RAF. Dad's fun and love of his job came to an end with a posting to MOD and ultimately led to the decision to retire from the RAF and move on to pastures new. These pastures were to be found in Dorset and I believe that on driving to his first interview for the position of Bursar at Bryanston School, he fell in love with the stunning beauty of the surrounding countryside and knew that, quite simply, this was where he wanted to be. Luckily his application was successful, he got the job and even more fortuitously, Mum loved the surroundings as much as he did. So began the establishment of his next phase and one which suited him perfectly, right down to the new morning commute when he greeted the cows "Good Morning Cows", greeted the sheep "Good Morning Sheep" and so on. It had to be a huge improvement on the London Underground!

He loved the school, totally believed in the ethos and was excited to help in the expansion and development of the buildings in order to support the progression of both the pupils and the school's reputation as one of the top public schools within England. He also enjoyed the friendships and camaraderie that he built with the Bryanston family. As with many things, he turned his wit, humour and wordcraft into an opportunity to reflect upon some of the challenges that a Bursar faces, and so began a series of publications which led to his reputation growing amongst the public school network and bringing amusement to many. *The Bursar's Wicked Way* was read throughout the network and, although it was sometimes at the expense of the Headmaster, Common Room or even the parents, it always remained on the right side of proper and respectful whilst providing an illuminating insight in to his observations of the challenges he came up against.

As much as he loved the school, he rejoiced in attending a school church with full choir and wonderful majestic interpretations of some truly glorious music. It spoke to something deep down in his soul and reinvigorated him for the week ahead. Peter Latimer, our organist today, was the Director of Music at Bryanston at that time and Dad had a huge amount of respect for his musical talent but also his extraordinary ability to bring out the same in so many others.

Eventual retirement from Bryanston came after a successful and truly enjoyable 10 years there – so successful and enjoyable that prior to his departure he even managed to persuade Mum to join the team as a matron, craftily leaving him freedom to embark upon the next and final reinvention of himself as a golfer. Monday morning roll-ups, Wednesday competitions, and Friday because it was Friday, became the routine of his weeks and he had little interest in being rerouted for days out, shopping trips or any other activity Mum may suggest – unless, of course, they conveniently fell on a Tuesday or Thursday and he didn't happen to have any extra golf games scheduled. A perfect week would include David or

Mark visiting for the weekend, thereby legitimately allowing him to play again on a Saturday! Anyone who played with him would have considered him to be a congenial and rather agreeable companion – if they could only have kept up with the speed of pace as he strode out across the fairways, eyes forward and trolley bouncing along behind.

We have received many wonderful letters over the last ten days reflecting upon all of these phases of his life and many of them have told us what a gentleman he was, how he was never one to force his opinion on others, but when asked would provide a well thought out and considered response that was normally based firmly on the side of common-sense, how enjoyable his wry sense of mischief and humour were, what a witty and engaging companion he could be, how generous and welcoming a host he was and how talented, reliable and appreciated he was within his working roles.

To us, quite simply, he was Grumpy to Alex, Teddy, Sophie, Amy and Ethan, a much loved dad to David, Mark and myself and, of course, a much adored husband to Mum. The hole that he has left behind is huge and none of us can come close to filling those big shoes that I mentioned at the beginning of this tribute. We thank him for all of the richness and love that he brought to our lives and we will continue on our way, a lesser family without him but so very grateful for having had him with us for so long. We now hand him into God's eternal care with our love and blessing.

Helen Goucher (David's daughter)