

Uncle Den's Funeral

20 February 2015

When I talked to Uncle Den about making speeches at weddings and funerals in the past, he was always very helpful with advice. I remember him telling me to 'print it all out – and print it all out big – size 16 font, so it's easy to read and it's one less thing to worry about!' Thinking about it now, I wonder if the size 16 font was more to do with his advancing years, than for my benefit!?

Gillian has kindly asked me to pull together a few of my memories of her dad, my uncle, Dennis Bray. Thank you for the opportunity.

What comes to mind when I think about Uncle Den?

His house in Southampton with its brilliant stereo set up with speakers in every room and a futuristic control panel - not forgetting, the amazing lights in the lounge which all came on from one switch! He also had an intercom from his lounge right down to his workshop at the bottom of the garden (set up so Auntie Ann could summon him back for lunch!). I remember many happy visits there as a child.

His stories about the past – most of which I'd probably heard a few dozen times (err...a few times!) before, but I never tired of listening to them again.

His 'job lots' of presents for the family at Christmas – normally bought from Macro. He never used to buy one extra bright torch or handy pocket tool kit, if he could buy a dozen instead!

His generosity – he never overlooked any of our family's birthdays and the card would always be there a few days before the event.

His presence with us on the day that my father, his brother, died. He drove up from Southampton to be there and was a rock for us that day, as our world fell apart. It's something I'll always hold dear.

What else will I remember?

His smile and the twinkle in his eye.

His white hair – always immaculately combed.

His wonderful handwriting.

His quick wit and gentle humour.

His firm handshakes.

His 'Hello, old boy' and the fact that he always showed an interest in our lives.

In 1999, when Sarah and I got married, Uncle Den kindly did a reading for us. It was from 1 Corinthians chapter 13, a chapter all about love. For me, love summed up Uncle Den.

We can think of his love for his family – his fondness and the pride in his voice whenever he spoke of Gillian, Raph and Ruebyn's latest exploits and successes, as well as the regular phone calls to relatives and the Bray 'cousins'. He clearly loved his family.

We can think of his love for his friends and neighbours. Always willing to help people out, whether it was taking a neighbour to the shops or offering some of his sage advice to those involved in planning disputes.

We can think of his love for his work. He always enjoyed talking about his time travelling whilst working on negotiations for Pirelli, as well as his many memories and stories of his time in the RAF.

Perhaps most importantly, we can think of his love for his Saviour, the Lord Jesus, shown through his faithfulness serving in his local chapel in West End for so many years.

All of these things for me, summarise Uncle Den. He was a unique man. Someone with a great sense of humour, who was always willing to lend a hand or share a story.

His long life has had an impact on everyone in this room and all of us will no doubt have our own fond memories to cherish and tales to tell.

For me, the world is a little sadder and a little lonelier for his passing.

I'm simply honoured and proud to have had him as an uncle for over forty years and will miss him greatly. Thank you, Uncle Den.

Goodbye, old boy.