

Kim's tribute to her Grampy

From the turn out here today shows how many people my Grampy has touched. A lot of the cards the family have received have noted something that he had taught someone and the breadth of his knowledge and skills.

We've heard from Mike about his life building and running sites, his input into history books due to his local knowledge, his green fingers and immaculate garden, his animal knowledge and love of horses and his ever present faith. He's served on too many committees to mention and was a true country man. Always willing to help others and patient with his guidance.

Our Grampy has truly influenced the person I am today and I know many of you in this room will be able to say the same thing.

I'm going to share some of the things I have learnt from my Grampy. Life skills, practical skills along with underlying values. I'd like you to reflect on what you have learnt and the kindness he has shown to you over the years.

1. Hard work and resilience

The first thing I have learnt from Gramp is 'hard work and resilience'.

My most prominent memories of Gramp were from after he retired but I'm not sure you could really call it retirement. He was as busy as ever looking after other peoples gardens, dry stone walling as well as keeping up his own garden. He had an ability to get things done. He was a true believer in the 'if you want something done ask a busy person' mentality and the input he gave to his family as well as the wider community was testament to that.

Gramp did not suffer whinging. Even from a young age you were expected to get the job in hand complete. I was about 6 or 7 when I took a particular spectacular flying lesson from my first pony Miss Mouse and my nose connected to the fence post – blood everywhere Gramp insisted I had to get back on before I got cleaned up. I still have the scar on my nose today along with the understanding that if you get knocked down you get back up again.

2. Horses

The second thing I have learnt is the love of horses which has run through our family – although for some more than others! I think I got the worst of the addiction. I owe this obsession to him and he has looked after my ponies from when I was four and more recently looking after Charlottes little miniature pony Lilly who I am sure many of you know from her wanders around the village. He used to recall his joy of how he had jumped the hedges down Somerton road following the hunt after a fox his terrier Pat had put up from the log pile at the back of Fritwell. I'm not sure if he was prouder of the dog or the horse!

He brought my pony of a lifetime Charlie with his retirement lump sum and Charlie brought me much fun, mum many grey hairs, a raft of rosettes and trophies and many, many stories to tell.

When I visited him in hospital in his final week he was keen to tell me to be careful riding those horses and when I reminded him it was his fault I was an equestrian he called himself a wally for getting me into it. This passion has brought me so much joy over the years, learnt the value of hard work and caring for something else. I'm immensely grateful for the passion and support he has shown me in this hobby over the years.

3. Health and safety style

Now there are some things that Gramp has taught me that I have learnt from in a slightly different way – in how not to approach things!

Now gramps approach to Health and safety left things to be desired! To standing on fences cutting trees with a chainsaw (in his eighties!), loading the trailer higher than the car, hanging off of ladders and climbing on roofs he has certainly given all of us 'oh crikey moments'. He definitely wouldn't get his health and safety certificates today!

4. Importance of family

He taught us all about the importance of family. He was immensely proud of all his families achievements. If anyone needed anything he would be there to offer practical support and emotional guidance. He loved to have all his family around including his 5 great grandchildren and would be silly with them making them laugh and fill them up with sweets!

His love of singing and performing passed onto Mum, Jen and Sophia. You'll hear Jen sing later on. His building skills passed onto Mike, Matt and Max. He was invested in all of our futures and ambitions.

He was truly devoted to his beloved wife Ruth. Grans recent reflection to me that they looked after each other and it 'wasn't that bad really' is best reflection of spending 69 years of your life with someone.

5. Being fair and showing kindness to others/ humour

Gramp taught us all the art of being fair, showing kindness to others and the art of humour. There was no hierarchy with Grampy. You were all treated the same regardless of status or role. He was kind and gave freely of his knowledge to others. From judging at the local flower shows, exhibiting his vast collection of billhooks and sharing the craft of making hurdles. He gave freely of his knowledge to others. He used to run the chapel harvest auction – stirring the audience up to higher prices challenging them to 'phone a friend' as deliberated about spending an extra 50p. He always rounded off the auction with a punnet of small onions saying 'that's your shallot'.

6. Green fingers

You will all have seen Grampy's amazing garden. Gramp always used to claim to me that gardening comes down to 'you put it in and it lives or dies'. Now I have tried this approach to gardening in my own garden and all I can say is he definitely had more success than me so I'm not sure it's that straightforward. We all enjoyed pottering in the greenhouse with Gramp as kids – sowing seeds, watering them and watching them grow to then enjoy the produce! Peas straight out the garden, carrots washed in the water butt and tomatoes snuffled straight from vine. My own children still enjoyed these rituals with Grampy Don in last few years.

His Dahlias were his pride and joy. Everyone here will recall the pure joy of colour in Gramps garden through the end of the summer into Autumn. I specifically planned my wedding around when the Dahlias would be in bloom and Gramp managed to grow all the flowers for my special day and they were truly stunning.

7. Dry stone walling

Grampy was one of the few who continued with the dying art of dry stone walling. All of us grandchildren as kids used to go with him from age 9 when I went my job was to sort the stones into sizes and find the right one when he described what he needed for a particularly awkward slot. I'd then pack the middle with the small stones for the infill. We made quite a team. A unique skill maybe I'll find a time to use it again?

8. Power of faith

The consistency of Gramp's faith never wavered, his input into this chapel spans decades and gave him peace at the end of his journey. I hope this faith will help comfort Gran and us all as we start to navigate a life without him in it.

Close

There are so many things which I could of mentioned here and I am sure you have been thinking of things I haven't mentioned as well.

Thank you Grampy for shaping the person I am today – for sharing your love, practical support, knowledge and values with us all especially his family.