

Lynda Costerd

11th May 1927 – 14th May 2015

Commemorative Account of Geoffrey George Toms

It's very hard to put together a commemorative statement about someone who had so many redeeming qualities and a real character and a bit of a charmer but I will attempt to try.

My dad was born on 11th May 1927 and was named Geoffrey George Toms, I always thought it sounded like a really posh name but my dad definitely couldn't ever be described like that. He was born in Erith and he was one of 4 brothers.

The Toms family were already quite well known due to their sporting prowess and my dad certainly strived to carry on this prowess but instead of becoming a runner like his dad, his passion was cycling and he was really good and even talented professional for a while.

He met the love of his life my mum through club cycling. 3 years later they married on 24th May 1951. Due to his cycling dad always kept his hair in a buzz cut and mum asked him to let it grow a bit for the wedding but when he turned up at the church he was sporting a freshly buzz cut head of hair.

My mum was my dad's whole world and they were pretty inseparable. The day he passed was only 10 days till their 65th anniversary. Dad was very romantic when it came to mum. He initiated a renewal of their vows on their 50th anniversary and ensured mum had a bouquet of the same flowers as she had carried 50 years before.

My mum and dad went on to have 2 children, myself and my older brother. My dad was a good dad but quite strict in his requirements of behaviour, though it has to be said that when he became a grandad he became a complete and utter push over, something I did point out to him many times.

Dad worked in sales throughout most of his life and he really had the gift of the gab as the old saying goes ["he could sell water to a fish"]. Dad was never predictable and definitely kept mum on her toes. She often used to tell us how he used to drive off to work in whatever car they owned at the time but would drive home in something completely different as he had done a deal or a trade with someone as he'd got bored with what they had.

Dad was a real character and a proper charmer. He had this way of making all the women among their friends feel really special but in such a way that it was never misconstrued.

There are so many antics and behaviours I could tell you about which were all part and parcel of my dad but being as that would take way too long I'll just mention a few of them. My dad was capable of falling asleep anywhere he was known to have fallen asleep at a party with his back against the speaker with the music blaring out. He also hated the cold so much and I remember I'd gone on holiday with mum and dad and I tricked dad into thinking that the water was really warm when it was in fact freezing cold. Dad was a person who just dived straight and, in this case, straight back out again. I gave mum and I a really good laugh.

Dad always used to tell me how proud he was of me and he had a way of looking at you with so much love. I had a daughter and he always used to refer to mum, myself and Kerry as his 3 girls.

Unfortunately by the time Kerry had her own daughter, ^[personal/sensi] dad had been diagnosed with Vascular Dementia but his love for [Kerry's daughter] still shone through and we have some amazing photos and memories of the time they got to spend together. He was walking with a stick by then and like all small children,

[She] wanted to mimic her Pops so he cut a walking stick small enough for her to use and they used to walk hand in hand both with their sticks.

Dad was a very proud man and he hated what Vascular Dementia was doing to him and how his ability to look after mum and his girls made him so angry and upset. He and I had quite a few conversations about how much he hated himself and his life now and he did used to say about how he didn't want to live like this anymore. This disease stripped him of his dignity, strength and the overarching love he had for his family.

I was away on holiday when my daughter rang me to tell me that the visiting nurse decided that the dad should be admitted to Rochford Hospital where they would be able to help him with his talk of ending it even though dad had Vascular Dementia and these were not rational thoughts and feelings.

My dad walked into Beech Ward on Tuesday 8th May 2015 by the 11th May, his 88th birthday, he looked like he had been beaten severely, he had an obvious broken nose, 2 black eyes and so many other injuries but he was also as we now know comatose. Within less than a week they had stripped my dad of absolutely everything, his dignity, strength, mobility and any independence he might have had. It was beyond horrific to see the damage that had been done. On 14th May 2015 he passed away in Southend Hospital as a result of the injuries and infection from his very short time on Beech Ward.

Life without dad is so hard. Mum had lost her soul mate, I have lost one of my best friends and Kerry and [her daughter] have lost the best Grandad/Pops you could ever wish for.

We will never get over the guilt we feel over leaving him alone with people who treated him so horrifically and denying him the love and support he needed. The constant anger is so tiring and we can only hope something positive will come out of this Inquiry and nobody else will suffer whilst in their care.