

Eulogy to Peter Liell (S52-58) by his brother James Liell (S53-60)

Peter, dear Peter, such a very special person in so many ways. All of us will have our own memories, and after this service, we shall be able to share them, with joy and laughter.

Early Years

We grew up In Loughton, then Sawbridgeworth, via Oaklands Kindergarten, St Aubyns, then Brandeston and Framlingham College. Peter, Liz and I had a sublimely happy childhood with our long suffering parents doing so much for us in every possible way. Living at Two Ways in Connaught Avenue we had a lot of fun with our lovely friends and neighbours. I remember Jimmy Latham taking a party of us to see the Crazy Gang at the London Palladium, where we had a vast box, just above the stage, to fit us all in. In 1947 there was that wild winter with all the snow – Peter aged 8 and I 5 had great times tobogganing off Nursey Lane on the edge of Epping Forest. Thereafter, if there was snow about, Peter would be out on a toboggan, be it in Sawbridgeworth, Switzerland, or later Oxford, with his great friend Edward Walker. It was also that winter, on 4th February, that our sister Liz was born, mother saying that “she had arrived in a blizzard”! A few years later, in 1953, father bought a tv for us to watch the coronation, and several neighbours crowded round – none of us had seen a telly until then!

At St Aubyn’s Peter, followed by James, joined Harold Colley’s boy scout group. In 1950, there was the summer camp in Eskdale, abandoned after 3 days heavy rain burst the banks of the river Esk, which flooded our camp site, soaking everything, including us. So we struck camp and headed back home. Think Baden Powell!

When Peter was 11, he went to board at Brandeston Hall, the prep school for Fram. I have here a recent letter from Richard Overend, who writes :-

“I remember the day we met as new boys at Brandeston in 1951. We remained good friends from that day on. It was your dear Dad who arranged for me to be in Stradbroke, so that Peter and I could be together. Hardly a day passes that I do not think of him”.

I believe Peter enjoyed Brandeston – there was a lot of sport, and he was academic, so the masters liked him. In 1953 he went up to Fram where he did well; several “o” levels and “a” levels, in preparation for the law society exams.

My Sporting Brother

With the 1950s came 10 years of relative prosperity, and optimism: The Empire was still largely in tact, and the Pathe News, with its cockerel, was always cheerful and positive, announcing how well Britain was doing generally, and with a strong emphasis on Sport. The Liells were enthused and became part of the National Sporting Euphoria, which seemed mainly to do with CRICKET. There was plenty of it at Fram, with Peter enjoying the bat and ball; and his throw to the wicket keeper, from the deep, where he was fielding on a boundary, was formidable. HOWEVER, Peter's forte at cricket was on Eccles beach at low tide. We would start a game with 4 or 5 of us, and very quickly, there would be another dozen or more eager to join in. Peter was the star of the show, and he just loved it. He was competitive too. At Fram he reckoned he was the fastest sprinter in Stadbroke, our house, and assumed that mantle. But then, along came one Bill Collard, with his deep breathing exercises and running spikes (almost unheard of), and on Sports Day, Peter just lost by a whisker!

After Fram, we spent several happy years at Woodford Rugby Club, where Peter proudly captained the B team. We enjoyed relatively unfit rugby matches versus other London clubs, followed by high tea, gallons of Whitbread, naughty songs, then off to a party somewhere. Most of the Loughton Gang also played – Patrick Griggs (I can still picture his speed and swerve), Frank Chappell, also very quick on the wing, James Latham, not quite so quick, Peter Chappell, who seemed to be in less of a hurry, and the very nifty centre, Malcolm Walker. It is worth mentioning that, a generation earlier, the fathers of all those mentioned were Woodford playing members, including our father, and his brother Jacko.

And, of course , there was golf. Peter captained the OF golf team for some years, playing in the Halford Hewitt at Deal. He was a member of the Royal Worlington and Newmarket Golf Club for many years. In his earlier, Norfolk era, he was a member at Sheringham. One midsummer's day, he and a chum set off at dawn and played until dark, covering 104 holes – nearly 6 rounds, in 18 hours! OUCH!!

Years later at an OF golf weekend at Aldeburgh, on the 17th hole, Peter got his much wanted hole in one. I was playing in the group behind, and heard the whooping and hollering, so guessed what had taken place. And Peter was over the moon! There was much champagne consumed that night!

As well as cricket, rugby and golf, Peter loved his squash, tennis, real tennis (both in Oxford and here at Hatfield House), croquet and swimming.....and if it rained, there was always bridge and scrabble!!

Peter, like his father before him, had always stayed close to the old school, and was hugely involved with the Society of Old Framlinghamians over a period of more than 40 years. The President writes,

“I remember Peter well as both a trustee and vice president: His enormous contribution is recalled by many of his colleagues.”

Peter Howard Dobson, a co trustee, writes

“His wise counsel and knowledge of legal matters was much in demand, and for which we all are immensely grateful”.

Peter the Great

Those 3 words say it all, don't they?

Our dear brother had an aura about him, all to do with kindness, generosity, thoughtfulness and humility.

Peter's professional career in the law, over the years, was healthily eclectic, he successfully indulging in different disciplines, until becoming deeply involved with the many aspects of education, which greatly appealed to the kind and thoughtful person he was. Latterly, for many years, Peter was editor of the Law of Education , widely acknowledged as the leading authority on education law in England and Wales. Peter had a natural affinity with the written word, with much of the composition of his letters and articles on a par with the likes of Bernard Levin. Jean, has, similarly, always been interested in education, working with the authorities on school placements in complicated and sensitive cases, so they had a common interest to enjoy together.

Peter met Jean in 1983 at a Marlborough summer school (possibly over a glass of something!) where their eyes connected, and their enduring relationship began. This involved Jean seeing Peter in Oxford, and Peter visiting Jean in Potters Bar. Some years later they became engaged, then married. Many of you will remember that special day here, (also officiated by Peter's old friend Richard Hanmer), about which Kate Booth wrote this little ditty:-

“We motor on to Hatfield House, the perfect rendezvous

St Ethelreda hears your vows, let us be glad you had the nous

To say the words ‘I do’

The words of wisdom strike a note, we'll heed them all for sure

The rousing hymns all get our vote, and then the tune on which we dote

By Charles Marie Widor

We guzzle, quaff, and chat with friends and later say ‘Adieu’

The pleasure of the day transcends our wildest dreams,

But now we send our heartfelt love to you”

Peter and Jean enjoyed over 30 happy years together. They holidayed extensively, often travelling by train, which they both loved, and much time was spent at Barn Piece, in Norfolk. At home, in Potters Bar, they enjoyed the theatre, with regular visits to the National: they loved orchestral music, and would often go to Festival Hall concerts with Kate and Richard. Peter sang in several choirs over the years, and it seems that his singing career kicked off aged 8, in Loughton, when he and Judy and Robert Walker would perform “Three Juvenile Delinquents” by Noel Coward, whenever they could, and possibly, ad nauseam! Peter and Robert sang the song again 60 years later, at Potters Bar, with Peter remembering every word! For many years, Jean and Peter had happy times singing in the Barnet Choral Society

Peter always enjoyed the love of a large family, with Liz and me, nieces and nephews, several aunts and uncles, and many cousins. Our immediate family made a point of keeping in close contact, especially on Peter’s birthday, in November. He was later thrilled when he became a great uncle, and when his family was joined by step children and step grandchildren, who brought him so much happiness; and latterly, even more happiness, with Clemency, Zoe and Alexandra. Peter would have been so delighted to know that his son Edward is here today, to play the organ for us.....and, no doubt, for his father too.

Liz and I were so fortunate to have dear Peter as a brother: We are all most privileged to have known him, and to have him as a friend.

Thank you all so much for coming today.