

**Celebration Of Life Service For
Antony Collins Purkis
Led by Dave Foster – Civil Celebrant**

Entrance Music – Ring Of Fire by Johnny Cash

WELCOME

Good morning ladies and gentleman, you are all very welcome to the South Oxford Chapel and thank you for being here. Before we start the service, please may I respectfully remind you, to check that your mobile devices are on silent, thank you.

We are gathered here today to pay tribute to, and to celebrate the life of Antony Collins Purkis, better known to everyone of course as Tony.

My name is Dave Foster, I'm a civil celebrant and it is a privilege, and an honour, to be asked to lead you through this service, for Tony, on behalf of his wife and family.

Death, in a great number of ways, unites us all, for it demands that each of us put aside our work, our business and our pleasures to unite ourselves with everyone here, fellow mourners, who share in a common bond of love, friendship and respect for the deceased.

As with any funeral service, we gather to mourn a departed loved one, to pay tribute to their achievements and their life, to comfort one another and to give our support to each other.

We are here, not only to share the pain of losing him, but to reflect on the joy and love, that each of you were privileged to share with him, during his life.

Today is the time when we bring him close to us, and also the time when we let him go. But, in coming here together today, to talk about his life and remember the person that he was, will allow us to be in his company for just a while longer.

I would now like to invite Tony's wife, Pat, to the front to read an extract from the poem 'Intimations Of Immortality'.

Poem – Extract from intimations Of Immortality – Read by Pat Purkis.

Eulogy –

You will shortly be hearing a personal tribute, to her dad, from Tony's daughter Annie. But for the next couple of minutes it will be my honour to share some background information about Tony;

Tony was born, in London, to parents William and Molly, on the 13th March 1935, just days after Malcolm Campbell set the world land speed record in Blue Bird, an event that would also have excited his engineer father, alongside the birth of his son.

A big part of his childhood was spent in Northern Ireland, but he travelled a lot as a youngster and his family eventually settled in Southampton.

His parents split up in 1945, when Tony was just 10, and his father bought him up and therefore the two of them had a very special bond which lasted a lifetime.

Tony's dad came from a family of gamekeepers and Tony kept close to his Aunt Maude, her husband Frank (who was also a gamekeeper), their daughters Judy and Kathleen and worked hard to keep in touch with his step-family in the states- Patricia and her family, Brian and Annette.

Tony saw a spell in the armed forces as he carried out his National Service for the REME, the Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers.

It was fate that brought Pat and Tony together. Pat had a friend, called Haydon, who was studying at Christ College and who also played Rugby. One weekend, Pat went to visit Haydon, but he had forgotten to tell her that he was playing an away game that day and that he wouldn't be there.

Pat was met, by Tony, on the staircase. Pat explained why she was there and Tony invited her to stay for afternoon tea and the rest, as they say, is history.

After a short courtship they were Married in 1959, at St Mary's church in Plympton, Devon and they set up home in Harlow, Essex.

His main occupation was as a Chemist, in the Research & Development department, in the Rubber Industry, which led to a career in Management and saw him and Patricia travel the world part of his work.

Not long after they were married, Tony was pondering a move from a laboratory to the Royal Navy, when he was offered the exciting opportunity to live, and work, on a rubber plantation in Malaya. An offer too tempting to resist, he and Pat moved there in 1960 and formed friendships with fellow expats and locals that last still'.

And it was whilst they were living in Malaya, that Tony set up a company football team and they played in the local league, against other companies, and Tony's team won The Planters Cup. In fact, Tony was quite a keen sportsman, playing Hockey, football (played for Cambridge University and Harlow Town), cricket, squash and golf.

Both of their children, Davey and Annie were born in Singapore and Tony and Patricia returned to Harlow in 1968 and then moved again, for his work, to Birmingham in 1978. It was in Birmingham that he gave into his passion for watching professional football. He and Davey had season tickets to see West Bromwich Albion during their glory days and were regular visitors to Edgbaston cricket ground to support Warwickshire. Another move to Essex (and of football club to Tottenham Hotspur' of which he'd been a life-long supporter), before the move to Abingdon in 1987.

Although this meant a move to the less glamorous Oxford United, Tony loved Abingdon and being so close to the Thames. As he eased off his work commitments, he joined Pat, in being actively involved in the health and voluntary sector. He became Chair of the local Mental Health Trust and was an early champion of putting patients first.

He was also the chairman of the Learning Disability Trust, now known as the Ridgeway Centre. As a result of his work for the Learning Disability Trust he and Patricia were invited to tea at Buckingham Palace.

I know that many of you here today, were involved with Tony and Patricia's activity in this area and greatly valued their commitment and achievements.

Tony had an enormous, but understated joy, in the achievements of his children. He was so proud that David had reached a point in his life where he can, despite his learning disabilities, live in his own house and make decisions about his future.

With Annie he loved the sharpness of her intellect and loved to spar on matters of the day, all the time surreptitiously picking her brains on legal and government issues.

Tony wasn't a man who would, as he put it, bang on about his children, but he was immensely proud of both of them.

So, what was Tony like as a husband and father? I would now like to invite Annie forward to share her tribute to him with all of us....

Thanks to Dave for his insightful words.

I'd like to say a bit more about Tony Purkis as a loved and loving husband to Pat, Dad to me and Davey, farther-in law to Tim and, I'm not sure how you describe the relationship, but he didn't half love our little dog Lewis. He fulfilled these roles in perfect partnership with my beautiful Mum, who was the love of his life and he hers.

First, I apologise that I might be a little biased. For a lot of little girls, there is an element of hero worship of their Dad. This included forming the belief, which I couldn't share with anyone else because of its sensitivity that he was a kind of James Bond.

This was based on seeing an envelope marked On Her Majesty's Service and the fact that he travelled a lot for his 'work'. I subsequently realised that the letter would probably have been a tax return but he remained a hero to me, always beautifully turned out apart from when he was gardening, when he looked a right scruff, and a cool and calm presence in my life.

As a little girl I remember finding Dad a bit mysterious – he seemed a giant genius who could be serious and quite stern but I delighted in the fact that he'd occasionally do silly things like shout along to 'Cecilia' by Simon and Garfunkel (or Guy Funkel as Davey and I referred to him) or almost fall off his seat laughing at a daft scene in an Inspector Clousseau film or ostentatiously take a 'sneaky' peak at the belly-dancer in the opening credits of the detective series Hawaii Five-O, much to Mum's amusement.

I also enjoyed his stories about his life and experiences, often involving funny impressions – his 'Jimmy Stewart' simply involved saying the name in a funny way and his impression of Sergeant Suff from his National Service Days, barking out orders, was very, very loud. I also have such fond memories of the time we spent as a family with his and my Mum's valued friends and wider family (he was also a devoted son-in law). The joys of playing in the wonderful world of Aunt Maud and

Uncle Frank's ancient cottage and huge garden, with the smell of sweet peas and scope to chase chickens, and visits with Grandpa Squirrel and Grandma and Grandad Rubbish were some of many things that Davey and I always looked forward to.

As has been highlighted Dad had loads and loads of interests – in fact I think his overall characteristic was being interested in almost everything and everyone. He loved science and how it could help understand the mysteries of the universe – and very kindly hid his disappointment when it all went over my head. He read books on so many subjects, history, biographies, nature and travel and he and Mum shared a joint love for travel and exploring different parts of the world.

He also loved fiction and Mum, as a voracious reader, and he, as a very meticulous one – a copy of War and Peace seemed to be by the bed for months and months and months, both inspired my love of reading. His recommendations, including what remain firm favourites of mine included Crime and Punishment, The Great Gatsby, Catch 22 and Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance – as I said, eclectic tastes.

And such eclectic tastes were reflected also in his tastes for music, food and pretty much all sport – I hope his beloved Spurs, having reached the final of the Champions League, don't let him down.

His fascination with the world in general was, I think, a key driver behind his love of gardening – the sheer wonder of nurturing things to grow and how beautiful they could be. He did grow vegetables and I blame him and a glut of courgettes for making these my least favourite vegetables. But he and I both shared a love of flowers, particular

favourites of his being roses, fuchsias, peonies, chrysanthemums and dahlias – all designed to create a great show.

He'd show you with pride around his garden (latterly maintained by the efforts of our good friend Adrian), pointing out plants with his right foot – something I'd hadn't noticed until Tim pointed out that I did the same. It really doesn't look as stupid as it sounds or maybe it does!

This wanting to share the things he loved was consistent with his belief in what he called the pursuit of happiness – something that seemed to grow and grow within in him. This wasn't a selfish aspiration but about a conviction that understanding others and striving to make them happy was vital to our own happiness. This was evident in the way he and Mum brought up Davey, giving him confidence in his own voice at a time before this was accepted wisdom. It was also evident in his work in the NHS and as a volunteer – putting patients, people with mental health issues and learning disabilities and their carers at the centre. He did this in our family by encouraging us all to seize opportunities to do our best and help others in the knowledge that he was there to support us.

For me this support brings me to his big strong hands. I remember them gently pushing the small of my back as I learnt to ride a bike, under my tummy as I splashed in my early attempts to swim, supporting me on my wedding day (no reflection on Tim but I was very, very nervous that day) and being there to comfort me until the end.

Holding those hands was also one way that we and the fantastic people at Bridge House helped comfort him.

Things have been hard over the last few years but, while some characteristics became more pronounced, my Dad remained a funny and caring gentleman with a strong sense of the funny and ridiculous, who enjoyed joining in with a wide-range of activities. And we were so fortunate that up until the end he still recognised us all and the mutual love we all had.

One of the things my Dad said to me when I was struggling with the loss of loved ones was that people stayed in the world with us for as long as we held memories of them and the value of their lives to us and others.

Thank you Dad - you deservedly will be remembered by so many people whose lives you touched and as an adorable, adored and adoring husband and Dad.

Through the memories that we and others have of you, you will still be with us having had a life that, in your words, was truly first class!

Thank you Annie.....

Reflection

When I met with Tony's lovely family recently, to talk about today's service, I asked them to describe him to me and I learnt that he was a cheeky, very clever, quite formal and, sometimes stern, man, who was also polite, thoughtful and a proper gentleman. Tony was a kind, caring, loving, helpful human being, who was also supportive, whilst presenting an image of being in complete control of any situation.

He possessed a wicked sense of humour and was always well dressed, he was proud of the fact that he never owned a pair of jeans. Above all, this was a man who placed a high importance on his family and put them first in everything.

And his love for Pat was obvious. In his last days he would talk constantly about her, her beauty, her kindness and his unbreakable love for her. Dementia took many things from Tony, but it could not take from him his love for his family.

We have heard some lovely memories of Tony. I'm sure that there will be many more memories that have not been shared today, memories locked away in your hearts and minds. If you would like to share those memories, with Tony's family, then you are all very welcome to attend the wake, which is being held at Bridge House in Abingdon, after today's service. There is further information about this on the back of your Order Of Service.

We are now going to listen to our next piece of music. Whilst this song is playing, you might like to turn the pages of your memory, like a book, and reflect on the good times that you shared with Tony. There are some lovely photographs on your order of service to look at whilst you listen and reflect.

The chosen piece of music is the Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven.

COMMITTAL

And so now, as we prepare to say goodbye to Tony, it is a good time to remember that every life is unique, every person is individual and special in his or her own way.

Each life is created and lived in by each person in the best way they know how and that is how Tony lived his life.

So, we thank him, for the gift that he has been to each of us, for the richness of his personality, for the pleasure of love, laughter and tears that were shared together and, as we now hold him gently in our hearts, let us prepare, quietly, to let him go onto the next part of his journey.

If you are able to, please now stand.

**Tony, your life we honour,
Your departure we have to accept,
Your memory we cherish.**

**In grief at your passing,
But in gratitude for your life
And for the privilege of sharing it with you,
We release your body to its natural end.**

**Rest now at the end of your days, your work here is done Tony. Rest in
the hearts and minds of all you love and may we all find comfort,
richness and example in your memory.**

**Thank you for being a loving son, a brother a husband and a father,
but, most of all, thank you for being you. Rest in peace.**

Tenderly and reverently we commit Tony's body to be cremated.

CURTAINS TO BE CLOSED

Please join in with me, if you wish to, as we say the lord's prayer;

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Closing Words

We are now coming to the close of this tribute to Tony.

I would ask you to take comfort in the fact that his spirit lives on, around us and within us. Talk about him often; keep his memory alive in your hearts and minds.

May you find richness and example in your memories of him and may you find strength and support for one another and may each of you find peace in your hearts.

There are some final words I would like to share with you;

*You may not be every parents idea of a successful son
But if in your life you never harm anyone
And to help those in need of helping go out of your way
And perform a good deed or two every day
The town of more people like you is in need
For you are a very good person indeed
Up the so called success ladder you may not have climbed far
And you may not drive around in an expensive car
But to your aged neighbor you are helpful and kind
She says people like you not easy to find
The unsung hero of your side of the town
In your words you never put anyone down
To live a good life you do the best you can
Which is the true sign of a successful man.*

Thank you, once again, for being here today ladies and gentleman.

We will be leaving the chapel shortly and your funeral director, will be on hand to guide you to the exit, so please remain seated until directed to leave, we will then meet again in the flower courtyard.

Thank you to everyone at the Co-Op Funeral Care and the chapel staff here at South Oxford for everything they have done for Tony.

The family would also like to thank all of the staff at Bridge House where Tony spent the last few months of his life. The support, comfort and for want of a better word, kindness that he experienced there made his stay a very happy one. We are heading over to Bridge House after the service and would be delighted if you could join us.

If you would like to make a charitable donation, in Tony's memory, there will be a collection point outside, or you can donate via the funeral directors, there is more information on the back of your order of service. The chosen charity is Dementia UK.

The final piece of music, that has been chosen to end today's service, is performed by The Kinks, and is simply called Days.

Thank you and safe onward travels.