

It's with immense pride and love that I attempt to do justice to Peter, my Dad, today – and it's with immense gratitude that I welcome his friends who are here to celebrate his life. I want to thank everyone who I've spoken with over the last week for their support and their kind words, and for sharing their memories of Dad, and also of my mum, Mary, who we were here farewelling just five and a half years ago. They had 27 vibrant years together with never a dull moment, I'm sure, and it's some comfort to me to imagine them sitting together in some cosmic café having a cup of extremely hot coffee, and comparing notes on life as it passes by down here. There'd be some arguments, some laughs, and plenty of compassionate advice.

Although mum was the big talker in their relationship, Dad loved a good conversation, as I have been reminded over the last week talking to his friends and family. Together with mum, he created an atmosphere at the Greenwich house that was characterised by good food, good conversation and good wine. One-on-one, he was always ready to nut out a problem, offer a dispassionate appraisal of your situation, and, when called upon, offer his advice. He also relied on his friends quite heavily as springboards for his own thoughts and dilemmas; I'd like to thank everyone here who supported him in that way – there are many of you. Particularly in the last five and a half years, these friendships were of great comfort and sustenance to him.

Peter was born on April 18, 1937 in Wellington, New Zealand, where his father Geoff had been posted by the Bank of New South Wales. The family moved to Suva, Fiji, when he and his sister Ann were still young, which is where I assume he picked up his fondness for Frangipanis, which he subsequently insisted on having in the garden at Greenwich. He grew up while the world was at war, and the very few recollections of his childhood that he shared with me led me to believe that this is where his lifelong adherence to what might best be described as 'austerity measures' came from. He was thrifty in the way that only those who have lived through lean times are.

From Fiji the family moved to Melbourne, where dad excelled academically, and from Melbourne to Sydney, where he attended Knox Grammar School. Again, he excelled – in the classroom, and on the hockey field. For someone so cerebral, he was in fact fairly sporty for much of his life, enjoying at one time or another golf, tennis and squash. Sometimes he would remind me, only half joking, of his excellent and sportsman-like calves.

Peter was also a bona fide geek: as a boy he collected comics avidly, and as a young man he published and collected sci-fi fanzines and journals – and so were born a passion for both collecting and books that lasted a lifetime. I remember him gently ushering me into the worlds of Asimov, Heinlein, Bradbury, Shakespeare, Milton, Daphne Du Maurier, Austen and the Brontes, Thomas Hardy, Conan Doyle – when I was very young. In case there was any doubt, Peter's love of books was enshrined for all to see in the home at Greenwich, which for the past 15 years contained at least two rooms that could not safely be entered without fear of death by avalanche. And of course he turned his retirement into a career as a second-hand book dealer, specialising in modern first editions across the genres of nautical fiction, crime and detective, science fiction and fantasy.

After Knox, Peter went into Law at Sydney University. Part way through, he left to complete his degree through the Admissions Board, working with a law firm and studying part-time. It was during this time, while working at Tress Cocks and Maddox, that he met his first wife, Robin. Peter's family lived in Longueville and her family had moved there about four years earlier, and Peter and Robin were among many young people who travelled by ferry each day to work in the city. They married in 1963, and Peter obtained his law diploma in 1965, going on to become a partner in the firm – but more importantly, the father of three children: first Tim, then David, then Alex (or Toobs, as he called her).

Peter left Tress Cocks and Maddox and the law in around 1975, and became heavily involved in community radio. He was an early subscriber to Sydney's first FM broadcaster, 2MBS, and soon afterwards was coopted into their programming team, thanks to his already impressive collection of classical music records and encyclopedic knowledge of the genre. When I began playing in orchestras and subscribing to the SSO and Opera Australia, it was the beginning of a wonderful bonding over music, as I discovered various works and he delighted in sharing them with me on his once formidable sound system.

It was at MBS that Peter met Mary, my mum – who turned up one day to volunteer. Robin and he divorced in 1977, and Mary and Peter married in 1979. I was born in 1980. I can only assume that this was a really difficult time for my Dad, Robin and the kids. It is to the credit of everyone involved that the relationship between Peter's first family and his second was and is overwhelmingly positive.

After leaving his legal partnership, Peter re-trained in Psychology, with Mary, and the two of them joined the NSW Department of Corrective Services as probation and parole officers, working with criminals who seem to have ranged from the merely roguish to the actually quite dangerous. They both enjoyed the work and its challenges, and for Peter, I suspect it was crucial in forming his egalitarian approach to people – and his talent and enthusiasm for analyzing them. Some of the best conversations I had with him, often running into hours, were trying to figure out what made certain people tick. He really believed that everyone was doing the best they could at any given time, with the inner resources available to them; the secret was working out what drove them. He was profoundly non-judgmental.

Possibly disenchanted by the legal system even more thoroughly after seeing it from a different angle, Peter spent the latter part of his career practicing and preaching mediation – alternative dispute resolution techniques based on communication, consensus and compromise rather than adversarial combat. Some of you met him in this capacity – I think some of you were even trained by him. Looking through one of his workshop manuals this week, I came across a list of the qualities of a good mediator – and recognised in it so many of Dad's defining qualities – among them: listening skills, analytical skills, creativity, patience, persistence, persuasive ability, and lateral thinking.

You could add to that a very strong sense of fairness. He was an honest person with immense integrity, who valued honesty and integrity in his friends, colleagues and family above anything else – even intelligence, which it must be said he also prized fairly highly. His group of friends represents a collection of sharp, interesting minds that he took great pleasure in sparring with. Similarly, he took great pleasure in tweaking the minds of his children from an early age, talking to them as though they were tiny adults. Most of my conversations with Dad til the age of 12 began with either 'Ask me a question' or 'tell me a fact.' The breadth and detail of his knowledge of history and science was incredible, and he could provide explanations of almost anything, from why the sky was blue to ancient Roman battle formations and the origins of words and idioms.

It's especially sad to watch a mind of this caliber brought low by dementia. As parts of him were stripped away, however, the gentleman remained, and

those who encountered him in Lansdowne Gardens, where he spent the last 16 months of his life, all commented on this.

I would commend everyone here who cared about or admired him to absorb a little of Peter into their lives today: be good, be honest, be kind; be curious about the world, and be cautious – foresee your problems before they arrive at your doorstep, and protect yourself against them as much as you can.

Approach life with a sense of humour – his was very sly, and when I recall his face in my mind's eye, there's always a slightly mischievous twinkle in his eye. Above all, and he used to say this *to* and *of* his children, the most important thing in life is to be *happy*. It was not about what you achieved, it was about enjoying your life fully.

He was a very loyal friend and a very loyal father, and he will be greatly missed.