

## LAURENCE ANTHONY FAGAN

May I welcome everyone here and thank you for coming to the Celebration of Laurie's life. Sadly, his contemporaries are now few in number and regrettably brother Anthony is unable to travel from his home in Toronto, Canada, his niece, Geraldine is also unable to make the journey home from Washington DC, America and his great nephews unable to travel from jobs abroad and a pre-arranged skiing holiday, but we know that they are all with us in spirit. Therefore, your presence here to-day is greatly appreciated.

With a 5 year age gap, Laurie and I have had parallel, but separate lives, though in our later years have become closer, as families tend to do. Reflecting on his long life I have recalled a few snippets of events or times in his life to which he would allude from time to time.

Amongst the family memorabilia we have a 1937 programme for a St Patrick's Day concert at St Joseph's Primary School when Laurie was 10 years. It included a song and dance version of Phil the Fluter's Ball in which the colourful character of Micky Mulligan was played by one, Laurie Fagan I mention this because humour has never been far away from his life, but I won't try to emulate him.

About 2 years later in 1939 our schools were evacuated to mid-Wales. While Anthony and I were deposited in a barely satisfactory billet in Montgomery, Laurie fell on his feet on a Newtown farm. On our one visit there we enjoyed a roast pheasant lunch, so, Laurie was OK. He started to learn to grow vegetables on the school allotment, a talent which, despite putting a garden fork through his foot, he retained thereafter.

The schools returned home where, alongside his studies, he played rugby and enjoyed playing in the school orchestra. He always remembered the school play, written by a Master, in which he participated. This was "The Dragon of Bidston Hill." I cannot see Laurie as St George, but at least Bidston Hill is now dragon-free!

At about this time he joined the St Vincent de Paul Society, visiting people in hospital, elderly parishioners and just lonely people providing company, a helping hand and a few treats. He maintained this connection until just a few years ago.

When at school he joined the Air Training Corps (the ATC) and was an avid reader of the "Aeroplane" magazine which helped him to become proficient in aircraft identification. This enabled him to enter the Fleet Air Arm for his National Service. After training as an air mechanic he was posted to Lossiemouth – just about the coldest place in North Scotland. Here, in addition to his aircraft work he secured a job on the coal delivery truck, thereby ensuring a warm barrack room and the appreciation of his colleagues.

Two other memories he retained of this time were:-

1. Watching an aircraft taking off – one he had worked on , and trusting he had not left a spanner in the works, and
2. At local dances wearing uniform was per regulation, but more important was avoiding treading on the girls' toes while wearing his hob-nailed boots.

Returned from National Service Laurie worked in a Bank for a short while, but he could not accept the life. Instead, he studied at the Seale Hayne Agricultural College in Devon becoming proficient in animal husbandry and arable farming, while also studying the best pubs in the area.

Returning home and entering the family Farm Supply business, his acquired knowledge gained him a respected position among his farmer customers. Alongside his work he played Rugby at Hoylake and Birkenhead Park for several years while also enjoying his music through the RLPO and the Bromborough Music Society. He was also a keen supporter of the Merseyside Trad-Jazz Band.

For many years he enjoyed exploring Snowdonia, often with the Catholic Ramblers. Together with 3 other bachelors he enjoyed convivial evenings in their little cottage and practised his Welsh in the local inn while identifying the Welsh names of most of the Peaks.

Eventually time took its toll, reducing his capability in the mountains and he restricted his walking to the Wirral while still enjoying his music and crosswords. Among his friends Maureen Cope gave him much support because, in her words "he makes me laugh."

Round about the year 2000, unknown to us, Laurie lost the sight in one eye through Macular Degeneration and in January 2007 he lost most of the sight in his other eye, leaving him needing support which we were happy to give. After

trying a brief spell in an Abbeyfield he moved to Trepassey for several years and eventually entered Westwood Hall Nursing Home where he received much kindness and care. His humour and erudite knowledge gained the love and respect of the staff. As Manager, Jane, said "Laurie was one on his own."

Laurie was always interested in the activities of the younger generation of nieces and nephew and many, many godchildren. He was proud of his sister's daughter, Annemarie in her capacity as a doctor and in later years she has travelled over from Hull several times a year to stay with us and visit Laurie – generally keeping an eye on us "old crocks". He was a loving uncle to her 2 daughters Laura and Sarah who gave him the name of Gruncle. He enjoyed talking to our son Richard who in his work as a Landscape gardener and tree Surgeon outside Chester brought him into contact with many farmers in the area who remembered Laurie and he enjoyed listening to the escapades of Richard and Claire's 4 boys and all their outside activities. He could never quite understand our daughter Geraldine's travels and life in Moscow, finally getting married and moving to America to live. He revelled in calling her husband Hank, the Yank. He had 2 other nieces in Toronto, but never knew them quite as well as those nearer to home.

Laurie seemed to take on a new lease of life in the summer of last year when he turned 90 and we had a party with most of the family members attending and his longstanding friends Cyril and Anne Beck. In February he developed a cold which turned into bronchitis. Then he was admitted to hospital because of an infection around his right eye which required intensive treatment. Sadly, he developed pneumonia and it was felt that he should return home to Westwood Hall where he was nursed through his final days in familiar surroundings with the voices of the caring staff he knew so well, ensuring he had a peaceful end.

His lifetime practice of his Catholic faith, his work for others and absence of complaint over the last difficult years awarded him his untroubled last few days. He made good use of the life accorded to him by God and now, as a result, enjoys the fruits of his efforts.

May he rest in peace.