

Barry Albin-Dyer

2nd February 1951 - 6th June 2015

Jon's Eulogy

When I was a little boy I thought my dad was a superhero. He was so strong and protecting he made me feel like nothing could ever go wrong... as I grew up into a man... I should have come to terms with just how ridiculous that is... and that he was a normal man without any supernatural powers... I guess I just never did, he got less big and I needed less protecting but never for one minute did I ever think my dad was normal.

He was such a loving man with a massive heart. As his sons we got to feel that the most. He couldn't walk past us without cuddling, kissing or just gripping your shoulder and giving a squeeze. The trouble was he never really knew his own strength... everybody here has shook his hand at some point and would know he had a really strong powerful handshake.

My dad knew how to give a telling off. I didn't get too many when I was little. Simon was far more troublesome. I can remember once when we lived above the firm and one night he asked us after dinner to wash up as he and my mum had some work to do. Well we started the washing up before getting distracted as kids do... but we left the tap running which led to us flooding the kitchen which was above, what was at that time, Freddy Albins office. My dad went mad.

For me the telling offs got more frequent as I got older. The worst I can think of was when I was 18. I reversed my car into my dad's office... it sounds bad but I swear his office moved that day... I slightly misjudged my reversing angle and before I knew it there was I... there was my dad and there was a cup of tea all over his lap.

The best thing was after a telling off. He couldn't stay mad at us for too long, he would give the biggest cuddle to reassure us how much he loved us.

He was so encouraging to us both always pushing for us to seek opportunities to learn.

I was seven years old on Christmas Eve when my dad said 'come on boys put your black suits on we're going out to work' and he took me and my brother to a family home to remove somebody who had passed away... My mum wasn't sure but he took me anyway. 7 years old, you probably think 'that's terrible' but looking back it was just as his dad and Fred had done with him... I learnt so much that night. When I woke up the next morning, on Christmas Day, the first thought I had was for that family. It was my first lesson in empathy.

Dad travelled all around the world to further his knowledge of the industry seeking ways to improve...

It was in Italy, a town called Pescara on Lake Garda where he found his most prestigious of coffins. He began to work with Mr Franco Ferrari the owner of Ferrari Coffin Manufacturers and Mr Gino Grandi importing coffins to the UK.... He loved their product so much... it was what he chose for his dad, Freddy and Peggy Albin and of course for himself. This very quickly evolved in to a great friendship. Gino sadly passed away in 2007 but we are very grateful to Franco Ferrari and Gino's son Giovanni for being with us here today.

My dad loved Lake Garda... Simon had taken interest in this part of the business, he was 17 at the time so dad paid for him to have Italian language lessons... Simon suggested he needed time in Italy to truly grasp the language... so dad gave him a month off work and sent him to Lake Garda to work in the factory and learn the language fluently. We went to Italy to join Simon towards the end of the month. Dad was so excited to see him and so proud that he would be able to speak fluent Italian... so when we arrived we sat down for dinner, the waiter couldn't speak a word of English, and dad boastingly said 'don't worry.. my Simon is going to order for me'... I knew Simon hadn't been learning much Italian and I couldn't wait to see how he was going to get out of this one. He turned to the waiter and he said 'papa he wants spaghetti bolognese'...dad couldn't believe after a month off work and all those lessons all he had learnt to say was 'spaghetti Bolognese'.

As you may know my dad planned his funeral. We sat with him 9 months ago and went through all the fine details, he was so brave. We took him down the river on a boat on Tuesday night. On Wednesday night we carried him into St Georges Cathedral for a Requiem

Mass officiated by His Grace Archbishop Peter Smith and of course the most special day of all today. I don't think he could have imagined that this amount of people would be here, and all over Bermondsey and Rotherhithe, showing their respects... but he would have loved it, especially bringing the roads to a standstill he was often the cause of a tail back, but you really all have done him proud....

One thing we wasn't aware of was that he had kept all of his hair in a bag from his first haircut after his radiotherapy in 2013.... You are probably thinking the same thing as me and Simon when we received this bag of hair..... because the one thing our dad didn't give us in life.. was his beautiful hairline, so after trying a few ways of using Dads hair and realising it was sadly a bit too silver it came to light that he wanted us to go to Italy after his funeral to place his hair into Lake Garda in.

My dad's time as a funeral director was possibly the most changing of times especially in his earlier days and I was always so inspired by the way he embraced these changes such as new cultures, different

denominations... at times a whole new way of doing things.

Dad's ethos for Albins fast became 'the answer is yes now ask me the question'.

He only ever took what he needed not what he wanted and that has always kept the company secure.

He modernised the way things were to be done to an extent... but far greater was the fact that he highlighted the history of Albins and revived the meaning of all the traditions that were carried out on an Albin funeral.

The key to doing the right thing is knowing people's needs. This was a skill he had to learn the hard way... a prime example was whilst in America several years ago he had seen a funeral take place of a heart surgeon. The surgeons family had arranged a great big heart made of flowers to go around the entrance where the coffin was going to go into... some years later he was discussing funeral plans for a doctor here in England. He told him of his experience in America and how poignant the floral heart idea was. The doctor looked at dad, removed his glasses and said 'I

don't think that would be quite appropriate Barry... I am a gynaecologist.

Dad really took in every experience life gave him. Sometimes we don't truly appreciate what it is we are doing at present, it's absorbing what is going on around us that makes us better at what we do. He really believed in living in the moment and planned for the future accordingly. He always said we must keep learning and as funeral directors every day brings a new experience ...

His knowledge of bereavement and grief was hugely expanded in 2003 when we began to work for the Ministry of Defence repatriating all of our fallen service personnel, many of them back here to Bermondsey, before taking them home to their families... up to now we have repatriated 639 military personnel who died in Afghanistan and Iraq.

My dad was so proud to be able to carry out the intense role that we had. He was so proud of how we as a team achieved it, and of the way the people of Bermondsey allowed us to do it...with privacy and utmost respect.

In 2010 dad received an OBE from Her Majesty The Queen in recognition of this work and in 2012 Albins were awarded The Chief of The Defence Staff Commendation for outstanding support and commitment to the Armed Forces of a rare and exceptionally high standard and became only the second company to have achieved this award. Dad was immensely honoured of these awards and is privileged to serve those who served us and paid the ultimate sacrifice. He was later chosen to be Deputy lieutenant of London... he was over the moon.. sadly it was a role he only got to represent once before becoming ill.

Dads business acumen was second to none. His true strength was knowing his own strengths but also knowing his weaknesses. He would never admit them or show them to you. 'square pegs in round holes' was his term.

He was a real seed planter. He never believed in get rich quick schemes... I mentioned a couple to him over the years but he quickly rubbished them off and reminded me the importance of staying focused... and how right he was.

He felt that being a good businessman should not be based on where you are on the rich list but much more on what you have actually done with your business, and what your business has done for people... not just customers or clients but also what you have achieved for your staff... that is what is most valuable what you actually hold in your hands.

When he took over Albins having lived and worked there most of his life. He was a young man with hope in his heart and wings on his heels... He believed in himself. He had a plan. He knew he could show people his way and make them believe in him so he developed his network and created his team and what a wonderful team we have become... growing from strength to strength together over the years.. I always believed he was fearless... but later in life he explained to me that he had always felt fear... you had to feel fear to enable you to feel the desire to achieve what you want. It was courage he had in abundance, courage to try knowing he could fail, courage to pick himself up when he did fail... he described failure as his stepping stone to success.

My dad was hardworking, dedicated and full of passion. He wouldn't just tell you what to do he would show you, then be alongside you when you was doing it and when the job was done he would be the first one to pat you on the back and say well done.

He was a born leader and he was always right.

There were 3 simple rules you had to remember with dad

1. He is always right
2. If he is wrong he is right
3. If not sure refer to number 1

But to be honest he did always end up being right – it was quite annoying really.

If you worked for him you and your family would be like his family and his care and concern would be for your life as a whole. He didn't just teach you about the work and company but also he taught you life skills... As a boss his door was always open and he would give his time to anyone who wanted to chat... In this day and age that is so rarely heard of.

He cared about his staff and they cared about him always making sure you got a drink and something to eat no matter how difficult a day you were having. He carried an aura about him, he lit up every room he went in to.

My dad was the smartest man in the world.

To be a funeral director your appearance is vital as you have to care enough about how you look to a family.. to care for a family. In his words he had to be the epitome of sartorial elegance and he always was.

His attention to detail was unbelievable. He never missed a trick.

I used to think that his glasses had some kind of technology that alerted him whenever someone had a hair out of place or had any kind of stubble or unpolished shoes but he knew how to keep everyone on the ball.

Dad was always looking to help people. He was such a caring man in fact it was one of his struggles in life because if you had a problem he would move a mountain to help you... the rare occasion there was a

problem he couldn't help with, it would literally torture him.

I remember driving a hearse on the way to a funeral at Honor Oak and laying in the side of the road was a man who had quite clearly been living on the streets and his face was pouring with blood... he had been run over and everyone just stood there observing him and afraid to touch him because of his bad hygiene.

Dad stopped the funeral, got out of the hearse and held the man's face to try and stop the bleeding whilst waiting for an ambulance to arrive. Another example of him showing people the way in life.

Dad supported many charities not just in financial ways but with his time, he enjoyed having a presence and presenting awards and speaking to people in general. He gave his time to train military personnel, seminarians, trainee doctors regularly hosting bereavement talks for nursing home staff and London Bridge Hospital staff. He was doing this up until the last 2 months of his life.... even with a grade 4 brain tumour. He was such an inspiration.

He loved and cared for everybody. His compassion for people was unlimited. Dad always talked about perspective he could always make you see the positive side to every situation.... and he would want us all to do the same now.

He said when his mum Mary died it was the worst thing that ever happened to him but the greatest gift he ever received.. because it showed him what real grief was and the pain it causes.... this stayed with him always.

So that is what we have to do for him.. especially you kids, Olivia, James Jon and you have to show the others as they grow up. The gift that grandad gave... you must realise, as he did, how special it is and make it something great.

Me and Simon along with our families promise you all, as we did our dad, that Albins will go on as it always has with the special ethos that lives within it..... we know whats needed to achieve this..... It's in us...he installed it in us. He spent our whole lives putting it there.. and he is going to carry on guiding us steering the ship from above.

In fact we really will be providing a complete service now..because dad will be at the gates of heaven ready to welcome for people as they arrive.

There are so many friends here today from the funeral industry and I know you won't mind me saying 'my dad was the greatest funeral director in the world'.

On behalf of our family I would like to thank you all for your support and loving messages for my Dad through his illness and after his passing... he never really got on with technology... he was much more of a pen to paper man... but he would love the fact that he has probably been the most popular person on social media with such kind words and sentiments... So thank you.

We would like to thank Jackie for loving and caring for our Dad especially through his illness.

Father Alan for his friendship and for taking his service today. I know how hard it has been for you.

There are so many friends to thank - Johnny Donovan, Simon Hughes, his Wednesday Society group.. collectively You all walked by my dad's side throughout his life and we will never forget that.

To our incredible team at Albins whose support and kindness has never been more appreciated – your simply the best.

Our mum to whom we owe so much.

Our wives who support us in all we do. There is no one who shares our grief more than them – at the core of everything we do in life, is our families – we love you so much.

Much of dad's life is so well known by you all... He kind of belongs to everyone doesn't he!

But let me show you a side, the Barry George Dyer side that he intimately shared with his family.

He was shocked by how many grandchildren he had.. from being a lonely child to having two sons.. to nine beautiful grandchildren... But they loved him so much... he loved treating them often giving them envelopes with pocket money in or coming up to see them on a Sunday with magazines and toys. He would ring up out of the blue and ask what size are the boys or girls and then the next day he would have bought them all a Liverpool kit and dresses for the girls. He enjoyed taking them out individually on their birthdays

to places like The Tower of London, The London Dungeons, The Shard and sometimes just to the shops to buy them something.

It is the kids I feel for the most, that they couldn't have had more time with him... and that they never got to work with him.

Olivia said how he always went to the end of the earth and back to make you happy'.... When you ask Marylou and Maggiemay where they got their dresses or toy from they say 'my granddad Barry bought it for me' even if he didn't... The boys loved him watching them play football, and how proud he was when they scored a goal... if he wasn't there watching he would be the first person they would want to tell all about it.

That is what he did best as a granddad he spoke to the kids and their conversations were poignant and informative. He was always there for them...

When our Danny was really ill he took him, me and Jane to Lourdes with Father Alan.... The trip changed Danny's life, he was then seizure free for 4 years it was a miracle.. Unfortunately the seizures came back and Danny had to have two operations on his brain... Dad

was really unwell at the time but I'll never forget how he stayed by Danny's side. He wouldn't leave him... constantly reassuring me and Jane... With him there you just knew everything was going to be ok.... They are going to miss their granddad Barry so much but I know he will go on influencing their lives.

He never had daughters but Jane and Michelle really showed him a daughters love... they had a special relationship with him... I loved the banter they shared... everyone always called him Barry but not Jane and Michelle they got away with 'Bal' and he loved it.

They both said they couldn't have had a better father in law and I know he was full of admiration for them as mums.

He loved a brandy but only one or two. If it turned into a bit of a session he would start chucking them over his shoulder, without us knowing... for years we couldn't work out how he never got drunk.

My dad and Simon were different in so many ways and would often agree to disagree with both still thinking that they were right.... but you are more alike than you realise.. because in you I have seen the same passion

for the business.... I have seen the same affection for your children that he gave us and you and dad have always had the same dry and unbelievable sense of humour.... and I have enjoyed being part of that my whole life.

Within the 2 years he was ill he even wrote a book about his journey... which he completed but sadly it was not published before his passing..... all the proceeds of the book are going towards Cancer Research and helping to find a cure for this heart breaking disease (he wouldn't want me to miss this opportunity to promote the book)... This whole experience has felt like we have been in a film... a sad, sad film. It is like it is not real..... That's what Bereavement does... as so many of you well know.

When I read the last words of dad's new book it was clear to me they were words I should share with you today (read part from book).

The world is such a different place without our Dad.. but if everybody could take something from him what a better place it would be...

he always said to us 'be kind and have courage... show compassion to everybody...

have faith in goodness it will always come through for you...'.
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Goodbye dad we love you so much...

Thank you... thank you... thank you.