

Barry Albin-Dyer

2nd February 1951 - 6th June 2015

Simon's Eulogy

I stand before you today devastated at the loss of the greatest man I have ever known and loved. He was the bravest man, and the most caring and generous Dad, and we will miss him so much. Your messages of support and words about our dad over the past few weeks have given our family great strength and fill me with immense pride. We know we share this grief today with so many. He was a true Gentleman!

On the 6th June 2015 at 3:20 pm after a 2 year battle with brain cancer Barry Albin Dyer took his last breath on this earth. It felt like my world had stopped. It has been the hardest time I have ever faced watching this pivotal figure in our lives deteriorate and eventually pass away in front of us and be helpless to prevent it. He wasn't just my father he was my best friend. He was always there for me and Jon and we never imagined a world without him.

I walked out of his home in Rotherhithe Street where he died and stood along the river, it was a beautiful day and everything was still. I looked out on the river, there was boats going up and down, opposite I could see people laughing and joking outside the pub, joggers kept running past and everywhere I could see people just enjoying the weather. Where I was, was great sadness and loss but all around me life continued and I was reminded of all the many bereavement talks he had given and particularly the piece about perspectives and that life goes on!

Later that day me and my wife Michelle went back to where our children were to tell them about granddad and that evening as we walking back Harry looked up at the sky and noticed the brightest star, “look” he shouted, “that must be Grandad” and we all smiled. Kids have a way of helping you cope!

The times I have stood at the back at funerals listening to my father deliver these eulogies for so many other families we have served, he had a natural way about him and always spoke so eloquently. I never imagined we would be doing his so soon.

He would usually finish his eulogies reading a paragraph from one of his favourite books called a grief

observed by C S Lewis, author, of course of the lion witch and the wardrobe. He wrote this book after losing his wife and I am going to begin this eulogy by reading this paragraph:

(BOOK) I can relate to those feelings

Back in 2013 dad got to fulfil one of his life's ambitions, he drove the route of the mille mille route a 1000 mile race across Italy. He had bought himself a classic Morgan sports car and had it all done up in preparation. He organised the trip with his close group of friends and set off. They had a great time and he loved it.

It was when he returned that he felt something wasn't right and went to get checked out.

On the 1st July 2013 following a scan Barry was diagnosed with a Malignant Grade 4 brain Tumour, we were all gutted. However we looked at it as just another challenge in dad's life and one, with all our support, he would get over. I don't think we understood the severity of a grade 4 tumour or we just believed he was invincible.

He had the op a week later to successfully remove a large majority of the tumour and started his long battle

with this awful disease. Through his blog on the website he kept everyone regularly updated with his progress.

He continued to work and make the most of his life, he wanted to be around us. He enjoyed the short breaks with his good friend Johnny Donovan who drove him over to Spain and France on separate occasions.

This friendship with Johnny Donovan is a funny one really, although they were like chalk and cheese they seemed to hit it off really well and I think the contrasts in their lives helped make them such good friends. Johnny could say things to him that no one else could get away with. He always made him laugh and dad would love lecturing him about his lifestyle. In fact when dad told him of his tumour he just looked at him and simply said "Oh well Bal, it could be worse", dad replied "How could it possibly be worse?", "Well it could be me" he said, they burst out laughing. That was what their relationship was like. They have enjoyed some great times together over the past few years. In the last couple of weeks Johnny would come down and take dad out in a wheelchair that he had got for him. It wasn't the easiest to push and they looked more like little Britain coming down the road.

However being in a wheelchair and depending so much on others is not the way this proud man would have wanted to live. When he passed it was awful to lose him but a comfort that he was no longer suffering. He fought this terrible disease to the end. His oncologist Lucy Brazil phoned us on the Wednesday evening after he died and was shocked that Barry had passed so soon. She described him as a very special person who she will never forget him, a lovely man. She was one of the only people who he would do exactly what she said. He always said to her that he was going to be her longest living patient and he achieved that too. He was such a positive person.

In fact everybody we have dealt with throughout this process has been amazing. From the staff at the London Bridge Hospital to the carers, Marie Curie Nurses and palliative team who looked after him at the end. You don't realize how good these people are until you experience it. Incredible people! A special thank you must go to Judith and Pat Holden who have been there with us all the way through and helped us so much. Also Rev Andrew Doyle who I am so glad was with us at the end to support us.

Barry George Dyer was born on the 2nd February 1951 in Guys Hospital, to George and Mary Dyer. They lived

on the top floor of a large house in Western Street with all the family around them. That was what it was like in those days.

Like us dad was born into this business and grew up above the shop in Old Jamaica Road. He believed he was conceived an undertaker and that, that was his vocation in life.

He took great pride in everything he did.

His Aunt Jean wrote this about him:

Barry was a big, bonny, bouncing, blonde baby. My sister Brenda and I were in our early teens living in the same house in Weston Street. Barry was beautiful but oh boy did he have a pair of lungs. No one got a night's sleep as he cried all night. It probably didn't help that his dad George doubled up his bottle milk formula, so Barry probably suffered from indigestion. We would take him out quite a lot for a walk in his pram, one day Brenda took him to the local sweetshop and went home leaving him outside, a fact Barry never ceased to bring up when he introduced Aunt Brenda to anyone.

His mum Mary worried about his lack of progress at school until it was discovered his eyesight was so bad

he couldn't see the blackboard, after that there was no stopping him academically.

Barry went to Bacon School and he was delighted to say to me that he'd been made Head Boy as I'd been Head Girl in **my** time. He was really proud later in life when his son Simon also became head boy at Bacons.

His world was shattered at 17 when his Mum, Mary died. He said this was the worst thing she ever did to him but the greatest gift she ever gave him. We feel this today.

His cousin Jan gave the following tribute:

Barry was born 10 months after me. We both attended Snowfields school, I was already at school when Barry started. I had to take him to class, sit with him, and then look after him at playtime. He did make his own friends, but if anyone hit him, he would always come and tell me, and like good team mates I then went and hit them, that is why he thought I was the best fighter in the school (an embarrassing label but necessary in the environment those days).

We were always together growing up and had a wonderful time. Although there was a time when work took me to other parts away from Bermondsey, I never lost that feeling of closeness to him, he really was like a

Brother to me, and I was and always will be so proud of what he has achieved. He really was my rock of support in later life, and I would not have got through all my losses without him.

It was through Jan that dad met my mum Also Jan. They worked together and were good friends. It was the companies Christmas party and Jan brought dad. She introduced them and they spent the rest of the night talking. They were about 17/18 at the time. Dad offered to take her and her sister Pam home, in his new bright red VW Beetle. This car was his pride and joy. When they got to mums house in Woodvale Pam run in doors and told their mum whilst mum and dad remained chatting in the car. When she went in her mother looked at her and said "Trust you to bring death into this house!" Even though most of her family were dead. She didn't have a great relationship with her mum and dad never really got on well with her either. Anyway they started dating.

After 6 months he said to her "what would you say if I asked you to marry me" she said "I would say no". Well he wasn't used to being told **no** but she felt it was too soon. They had their first proper row and she ended up getting out the car slamming the door and walking off. As she was walking off she heard his car door open and him getting out. Good she thought he is coming after me but he just shouted back at her "and don't slam my

door.” They agreed to wait to Christmas and got engaged.

They married 17th March 1973 at St James Church in Bermondsey, it was a lovely day. In 1975 they moved in above the now Culling Road shop.

Growing up she always wanted to have a proper family and dad gave her that and made her feel special.

In 1976 whilst pregnant with me, dad took mum away to Norfolk Broads with her mum and brother Paul. The drive there was torrential rain and he had to park the Beetle in a local car park whilst they were on the boat. The following day was bright sunshine and marked the start of the heatwave of 1976. They had a lovely week until they returned to the car! The dust had settled and the bright red beetle was now a grey colour and had been baking in the sun for a week. Dad was horrified. He loaded up the car and then disappeared. He returned some 10 minutes later with a bucket and sponge and proceeded to wash the car, to this day she doesn't know where the bucket came from.

I was born in the October and had quite a nice colour. I was due on the 4th but actually came on the Friday 8th much to dad's relief as he had football on the Saturday.

Dad adored me and mum felt quite pushed out. He was convinced I was looking at him and cooing for him

acknowledging our bond. I was a couple of days old. When I could crawl I would follow him around the house, I was getting pretty quick and I followed him as he made his way to the toilet one day. As he shut the door he caught my finger in it, I was screaming, but he thought I was crying for him so kept saying, "its ok daddy will be out in a minute". Mum was shouting open the door! I nearly lost the top of my finger.

In fact after me he didn't want to have any more children as he didn't feel he would have enough love for two. Mum didn't want me to be a lonely child and in January 1980 Jon was born and Dad was wrong because he loved him **more!**

Jon was a very good baby, according to my mum, very contented. They didn't want any more then as we were perfect, her words again!

Dad was very strict with us when we were growing up and insisted on good manners and taught us to be respectful. He was quite frightening actually when he was angry and had this **look**. The men know this look.

One day I was play fighting with a friend in my school playground at St James when another boy came over to join in. in frustration I told him to F Off. My friends just stopped and backed away with worry. I'm thinking

that told them but unfortunately for me my dad was standing right behind me. Whilst visiting the Midland bank on the corner, he saw me playing and decided to come over and surprise me. I ended up surprising him. He was fuming and just said "I will pick you up after school" and then left. The next couple of hours I spent planning an escape. He actually drove me to a piece of wasteland near to where my nan lived at the Bricklayers Arms and my 10 year old imagination just thought, well this is where he is going to dump my body. Luckily my mum had calmed him down before he picked me up and I just ended up getting a good old fashioned telling off.

Whenever we played up though Mum would always threaten us with Dad. It was usually me though.

But although he was strict he was very fair and always wanted the best for us. I guess we were destined to go into the business but he always told us to come in when we were ready and be sure it is what we wanted.

I used to love playing jokes on Dad. He was very organised and would lay out all his clothes ready for the morning, he would have his razor out and his toothbrush with the toothpaste on. I couldn't help myself I would turn his clothes inside out, take the

blades out of his razor and apply bubble bath to his toothbrush, I remember him shouting at me once and all bubbles coming out his mouth. If he fell asleep on the settee I would get mums nail polish and paint his toe nails. I would put sellotape across the door frame for him to walk into, he walked into it once stepped back and his glasses stayed stuck to the tape. He threatened to get me back but never did.

When we were younger he loved taking us to pictures over the west end and going to different restaurants. He also loved the theatre and would take us when we were old enough. It was a cultural upbringing.

Other than work his main passion in life was football. As a boy he played for his school teams as well as CUM boys club. He also represented South London and Crystal Palace. He was a good old fashioned centre forward oh and dirty!

Whilst at Bacons he became good friends with one of the teachers Tim Ricks. Tim introduced Dad to the Polytechnic, a southern amateur club based in Chiswick, this was where Dad enjoyed the best football years of his life and met some of his best friends. Every Saturday he would make his way over to Chiswick or that area to play football and when we were older we

would go with him. Later in his career at Poly myself Jon and Dad all played in the same team for a few games.

I asked his closest friends Paul, Tom and Rick who he met through the Poly to put down a little bit of what he was like in those days:

Barry joined the Poly at the age of 15 in 1966.

He worked his way up to the first team and then captained the reserves for a number of years.

His playing career spanned 25 years.

He was a respected member of the club and become a vice president.

He was a traditional centre forward who scored many goals for the club.

Defenders hated playing against him. His large backside (and his use of his elbows) enabled him to shield the ball and he would make their life hell.

He was great when the ball was at his feet but he could not head the ball for toffee. We made sure that he stayed in the opponents half, he was a truly a hopeless defender!

He played the game hard but fair, (well fairish!). He did end up having an early shower on a few occasions, mainly after a brawl or two.

He encouraged a great team spirit and after each game we would go to the pub, chat football and play spoof and other drinking games. Not so easy to do now with fewer pubs and stricter driving laws.

A number of us also played on Wednesday evenings at the Polytechnic gym in London and we have carried on that tradition by meeting monthly, most recently at Barry's house when he was unable to enjoy pubs as much. We have had nearly 450 meetings of the Wednesday Society and travelled to football grounds all over the North of England together with trips to Barcelona and Milan.

Barry was always intent on enjoying life to the full.

As well as playing football dad enjoyed watching me and Jon play. We played locally in Bermondsey but then joined Villacourt Rovers based in Blackheath. It was a great club and we made lots of friends there over the years. Mum and Dad liked the area and when a house came up for sale on the estate they took one look and decided to buy it. It hadn't been easy living

above the shop for all those years and we finally got a house that was our own and had a garden.

He had a proper goal made at the back of the garden for us from old goal posts he got from Villacourt and laid this old astro turf he got. Friends were always round and we would play out there until we couldn't see. We would do over head kicks all the time and I will never forget when Dad attempted one and nearly broke his back.

He also had built a small swimming pool. Dad, me and Jon would all get in and run round and round creating a whirlpool that we could then just float in, we had a lot of fun with that pool. One of the things he liked, unknown to most people, was skinny dipping and we would often return home from an evening out to find him having a late night swim, naked!

He enjoyed our family holidays, when we were younger staying on a farm in Cornwall and our caravan on Hayling Island. Then we started going to Majorca, but the place he loved the most was America. We started going to Florida when I was about 5 or 6 and I think he loved Disney as much as we did. We then started venturing further and found a lovely place in Fort Lauderdale. They were the best holidays. Later we

went to Washington and travelled across the mid coast in a camper van with friends. He had done a lot of business with an American shipping company and became good friends with a lady named Carol Bearden. Carol invited us to her home in Houston, Texas one year to stay with her family. They all became great friends and I am so pleased Carol could be with us today. They took us golf, baseball and horseback riding and introduced us to their way of life. Carol later moved down to Colorado and we enjoyed going there and doing the white river rafting.

Although Dad loved the house in Blackheath, to be honest he never really settled in the area or got use to not living in Bermondsey. He and our mother separated and he came back to live in Bermondsey.

Dad loved Liverpool and we enjoyed watching games together especially the champion's league final in 2005 when we beat AC Milan on penalties. He managed to take us up to Anfield on a few occasions but mostly he would take us to Millwall or Fisher Athletic. We really enjoyed the Fisher games and learnt so many new swear words and banter from the crowd the loudest probably being Del Turner god rest his sole. Abusive comments about the linesman and referee would be followed up by a "and your wife".

He got the opportunity to join the board at Fisher later on and along with committee members such as the late Chris Georgio, Dave Wilding, Les Rowe and Dogan Arif who came back to manage the team and others went about ensuring the clubs status and helped to bring back some good times. Me and Jon were both playing there at the time and remember some good years and we made so many good friends. Del boy was now running the bar and we had some great nights there, and the place on the stands was taken by the likes of Bertie Kite, the Hodges and friends. The abuse was pretty much the same though. I would get some good ones, "get in the box, bury it". Dad found them hilarious. He loved the old characters in Bermondsey especially the old Docker boys that had the little bar like Charlie Bennett and Jimmy Titchener etc. Sadly most of them have passed in the last few years but I am sure that bar is back up and running up there.

When Freddie Albin retired he spent most of the summer at his home in Majorca going out on his sail boat around the island. Dad would take me and Jon away for a week every year with Fr Alan to visit Fred. He loved him like a father and we spent some precious time out on that boat with Fred and his wife Peggy.

As I said earlier he didn't want any more kids but he always regretted not having a girl. Well on the 6th January 2001 my daughter Olivia was born and dad finally had his little girl. He loved her so much and doted on her. He loved taking her shopping and buying her things especially as she got older. One of the hardest things for him was that he wouldn't see her grow up. He talked about buying her first car and helping her go to university. I know though that he will be looking down on all his grandchildren and watching them grow.

18 years ago dad moved into his home in Rotherhithe Street on the river and started his life with Jackie. They loved it there. She says she had the most amazing life with Dad and went on wonderful holidays. She recalls a time on holiday in the Bahamas when he nearly had his legs bitten off by a shark. They went on a boat trip with other people and were allowed to swim in the sea which dad did, Jackie stayed on the boat. A shark was spotted approaching and everyone began making their way back to the boat. A young girl in the water just became hysterical and started splashing about. Dad calmed her and helped her back on the boat before him and narrowly got out before the shark got to them with Jackie screaming at him.

At the end of the working day he always made her go home first because he hated coming home to a dark house so she had to get home put the lights on and get dinner ready especially in the winter.

When they used to go for meals on a Saturday night with Alan they would have little arguments. Barry could never be wrong and Alan put up a good fight too, it was like having two children with her and she would have to tell them to Stop It! Barry always like to have the last word though and I know that will be the case today.

One of the worst things for Dad was that he wasn't able to drive after his illness for obvious reasons although he believed they were being over cautious. One morning Dad decided to reverse the car off the drive while he waited for Jackie. When she came out he insisted he would drive as he hated the fact that she had to drive everywhere. His eyes weren't too good and how he didn't hit any cars on the way out of his turning she doesn't know and when they got to Rotherhithe roundabout she just closed her eyes and prayed. He arrived at the yard and said "that wasn't so bad was it".

He loved the family coming round to visit them. He would say “ill make a nice brew” with no intention of actually getting up and making it because Jackie would do it. She didn't really want him in the kitchen helping as he made such a mess. He had to have 3 rich tea biscuits as well and loved a little bit of chocolate.

Myself and Jon are eternally grateful Jackie for the way you have looked after our dad during his illness.

At work he had a saying ‘Das Boat’ from the old German U Boat war film, which meant follow me no matter what. He earned incredible loyalty from his staff and they trusted him.

He was very generous to them and this extended to local people in need, whatever it might be he would try and help. Support for local committees, sponsorship, signing forms, writing character references or financial help. Sometimes he was too generous but he liked people so much that he wanted to help them.

By the way in future this will continue and if anybody needs help Jon's door is always open!

Dad conducted himself with grace and dignity and had great empathy. I always enjoyed going out with him on the funerals driving his hearse. I admired him greatly.

We would arrive at the homes and he instantly grasped people's attention and had an amazing ambience, everyone respected him.

We would have some of our best chats on the way to funerals, he was so knowledgeable and I valued his opinion. We was on the way to pick up a funeral in Darent, having such a good conversation that I hadn't realised I was in the wrong lane, we ended up driving through Bluewater with a hearse and three limousines. When we got to the house I was getting some questionable looks from the other boys so I told them she loved Marks and Spencer's, Dad just shook his head. We later found out that she did so it happened for a reason.

When he was paging in front of the hearse he was in his element and could be a real showman. He would swing his cane around like it was a magic wand and it seemed like it was at times, when he pointed it at people they would just stop and he could hold up the traffic with his presence.

The last funeral he attended was that of the late Jack Twynam a gentleman who he had a history with through Greens the florist. This was a month before he died.

The day he died a massive void was left in our lives but a huge Legacy was left that will live on forever. Dad was 64 years young but he lived a long and fulfilling life and achieved so much. As a close friend of ours said it's not the number of years you live but what you do in that time.

As you look around at Albins you see all that he has created and the reputation he has built. You see this fantastic team of staff (our family at Albins) showing the care and compassion that has been instilled in them by him. Myself and Jon will continue to show that devotion he gave to this company, he taught us so well. I look at the grandchildren with similar traits and you see the future. All that he was that he still is and he is all around us and will live on in our hearts and minds forever. Everything we do is testament to Barry Albin Dyer.

Queens letter