

Tribute to David Allanson from Michael (Taffy) Horgan

Quotation...

Large was his Bounty and his Soul sincere

Heaven as a recompense did largely send

He gave to misery all he had ...a Tear

He gained from heaven ,twas all he asked, a Friend.

That was a quotation from Thos Gray's Elegy in a country churchyard...one of Davo's favourite poems, and the words of which , for me capture some of the main elements of Davo's character.

His unstinting generosity

His integrity

His complete absence of bitterness or malice

And his pleasure in making and maintaining friendships.

One of the principal elements of Davo's character not covered by the poet's words was his wonderful sense of humour...

usually dry, often self deprecatory, and something he maintained right up to the end of his life.

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Davo and I first met in Sept 1953 , on this very campus as new boys to Douai school .

We spent the next 5 years playing together in the same rugby and cricket sides as we went thro the school ,and from teammates we became good mates and then best mates.

After school and after qualifying , we got together in the mid 1960's for two years in London as flat mates and in the early 1970's for a further two and a half years in Nairobi as house mates..

The next 25 years were spent pursuing our separate careers in different parts of the world, although we kept in touch and our paths occasionally crossed..

It was only after we retired in 2001 that we had the opportunity to again spend time with each other..

In 59 and a half years I do not remember an argument but there was one spat in our London days and typically it involved money.

We used to meet in Jack Brady's pub and pore over the racing pages to select the 4 horses to feature in the day's yankee accumulator bet.

For those unfamiliar with the term. just know that a yankee is a high tariff bet which can produce spectacular returns if all 4 horses are placed.

On this particular day we had picked 3 horses which we liked the look of, and were casting around for a fourth when my eye caught the name of a horse running on an obscure track in Scotland....a horse called DavidMike.

To me This was a sign.....Lady Luck telling us to pile in.

Not so for Davo however, who was no romantic when spending his betting money, and after checking its bona fides, wrote it off as a no hoper. He instead selected another horse which he thought had a bit more current form.

Of the 3 original choices, we got a first and 2 seconds ..the fourth and late choice came nowhere

Meanwhile David mike won at 14 to 1

Instead of winning over a £1000 each we won £15 to £20 each

As they say in diplomatic circles, there was a full and frank exchange of views.

..Davo apologised ... I forgave himeventually.

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For the most part of the 1st half of Davo's life Rugby was the dominant influence.

From his earliest school days He was noted for his exceptional pace and he was a star performer in the teams in which he played;

The culmination of his school career was his role as the pivotal factor in the school's success in winning the R. Park schools 7 a side tournament.

The first half of the final against R B Academicals was a nervy/ anxious affair, but was changed when D produced one of his devastating bursts of speed to simply run up to and around his opposite number to score the try which released all tension and anxiety; we immediately scored another try from the restart and eventually ran out comfortable winners...

Davo's opposite number that day was a boy called Gilpin, who would 3 years later turn out at Twickenham playing fly half for Ireland;- so no slouch, -but not quick enough to catch our boy.

Davo was quickly signed up by R.Park and spent the following years in their youth development sides, before making his first team debut in 1961.

It might sound strange now, but in the 1960's R. Park were one of the top sides in London and Davo blossomed amongst such good company.

He blossomed to such effect that in in the 1962/3 season he was selected to play in the final England trial as a member of the Probables; He was also picked for a select London Counties team scheduled to play the visiting touring team and he was by then already a regular member of his Kent county side.

Davo was not the greatest tackler ,and perhaps his lack of robustness cost him an England cap , but with what he had he was still some player. .

His final rugby offerings were given to E. African rugby .

By mid 1968 D was looking for change of scenery and a change of career. And an old flatmate friend put him in touch with a lawyer who was a partner with one of the big firms in Nairobi.

The partner was also the president of one of Nbi's main rugby clubs...Nondescripts.

After the usual negotiations In May 1969 D. found himself practising law and playing rugby in Nbi..

For 3 years David did what he did best...playing good rugby ,scoring great tries and making a host of friends along the way, , but when he left, among the host of good memories was his particular role in the Mombasa match.

Nondies were drawn to play Mombasa in the national K.O. tournament, a match Nondies were strongly favoured to win , particularly as they had D in their ranks.

Well Mombasa is 300 miles from Nbi , a tiring trip on a poor road .so the committee took the decision to fly the team down and keep them fresh for the game.

Arriving at the ground at midday , with a 5 o'clock kick off,, the committee and some of the team elders decided to go into town to see old friends while the rest of the team planned to have a a light lunch at the club and relax.

Well Davos idea of a light lunch was a couple of bloody marys...accompanied by assurances of the performance enhancing properties of a little alcohol , and proven by references to schooners of sherry served at Roehampton to the RP players on some of the bitterly cold Jan/ Feb match days .

By the time everyone got back to prepare for kick off, , more than half the team were legless.....

Mombasa won the game and as can be imagined the committee were not best pleased to find that their plans had been reduced to rubble...- but hey who could remain angry with Davo for very long?

He was soon back in Nbi scoring tries and was in fact later that season selected for a representative East African fifteen.

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If Davos sporting prowess came down thro his mother's side of the family., as she claimed – (she herself having been a Victor Ludorum in her school days.).

Well from his father he learned the appreciation and love of fine wines

Davo's father was Chief Ceremonial Officer to the City of London corporation, which amongst other things, meant organising the guildhall banquets for the great and the good...and the choice of food and the accompanying wines were an area of his expertise.

He also taught D. the social responsibilities of being a good host, and a good guest, and the role that alcohol played in those processes.

Davo once told me how his father had confided to him an opinion of a fellow golf club member with the words...

"I don't trust that man ..he only drinks when he is thirsty."

Davo's attitude to non drinkers was not quite so visceral, he took the Shelley Bermann view as he described in one of his routines, of feeling sorry for a man who doesn't drink. .because when he gets up in the morning, that's the best he is going to feel all day.

D went on to be a legendary host:-

1 ...no time frame ever attached to his functions. (His 60th birthday party lasted the whole of a long weekend...).

2 .any diner who wanted one more for the road was most welcome and D. would be pleased to keep him company.

3 No guest should be without a drink, and 4. An empty glass was almost an affront. .

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David left Nbi to return to Europe in late 1972 and after 2 years spent in Luxembourg at the Courts of Justice, David, made a life changing decision in going to Paris to enrol for a MBA degree at Insead.

Apart from enhancing his cv, he there met the love of his life Genee, whom he married in 1979.

After graduating he worked for ITT in Brussels and was then was tfrd to Munich where Diarmid was born in 1980.

In 1982 they moved to Atlanta Georgia and Hamish was born later that year.

1986 saw the family return to France, and settled in Gex - just outside Geneva.

David and Genee ran private consultancies for 5 years until David landed the job he was born to do;- he became Leading Counsel for a sports marketing company affiliated to the I O C in Lausanne.

The job involved leading a small team of lawyers in the negotiation of contracts with the sponsors of the big sports events, and Davo's legal and business degrees plus his own highly developed sense of pedantry...were ideally suited to the task.

Incidentally, despite years of working for software companies, David's computer skills were still so rudimentary that he was affectionately known to his team as "Digital Dave"

Genee was the daughter of a prominent Capetown family and Cape Town now became the destination of choice for the family's own holidays.

It was not long before David fell in love again, this time with the Country and he and Genee purchased a second home in Cape town, - a lovely apartment in the suburbs, and following her tragic early death in 2007, David spent increasing amounts of time there and was in fact applying for permanent residency status at the time of his death. This wish came to pass as he is now buried in C.T. alongside Genee in the family plot.

In early 2009, cancerous polyps were found on his oesophagus and during the operation to remove them an infection entered the site, and apart from almost killing him at the time, resulted in the removal of the whole oesophagus and most of D's stomach.

It was 6 months before D was strong enough for a replacement—a period of great discomfort. and afterwards only a small amount of normality returned as his palate had been destroyed and most of the pleasure from eating and drinking had been lost.

He was however able to join family celebrations for the wedding of Hamish and Katie and subsequently for the christening of his first grand son Benjamin, and he continued to

travel between France / S.Africa / USA / and UK visiting family and friends.

The final year and a half of his life was a succession of treatments and therapies to try to control the secondary cancers that developed, and all this with a digestive system which couldn't provide the nourishment needed.

Thro it all D. was resolutely optimistic tho realistic and philosophical and his courage in dealing with all these privations was quite extraordinary, bringing to mind a quotation from Shakespeare's Macbeth ...

" Nothing in his life so became him as the leaving of it."

When D. was in his late teens, his father proposed him for membership of the local golf club.

A neighbour and close friend seconded the application, and in his commendation wrote....

"In all the years that I have known him. David Allanson has conducted himself to HIS entire satisfaction"

How perspicacious was that?

50 years on and you wouldn't change a word...

The expression comes to mind of "see yourself as others see you"

D. loved that view of himself...and as a basically conservative guy , he loved to think that he was seen as a bit of a “ Jack the Lad”.

Perhaps the commendation might be a fitting epitaph

However I shall remember him as a Special Guy, and a Special Friend.