

## ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DAVID LEWIS AT THE FUNERAL OF TED DICKSON 11 MAY 2013

A few days after Ted died, I remembered he had left a message on my answering machine which I hadn't deleted. Eventually I brought myself to play it back, and I found not one but at least a dozen of his old voicemails.

These miscellaneous messages reminded me of everything I would miss about Ted. His warmth, his humour, his enthusiasm, his genuine interest in whatever I was doing, his clear insights into people and situations, and the importance he attached to all his friendships.

My thoughts went back to when I first met Ted some 44 years ago, at my brother's home in bedsit land, Hampstead.

A few weeks later we met again by chance, in the launderette on South End Green. While our washing was going round we went for a beer and a sandwich in The Garden Gate; and our friendship grew from there.

During those 44 years, with no significant interruption, we would meet every few weeks for a meal, usually a curry, and a good chat.

(Going back to what Alan was saying, Ted never threw a jug of water over me during these dinners; though there were times when I seriously thought about throwing a jug of water over him.)

I can go back even further, and tell you a little about Ted's early life, because he reminded me about it not long ago.

I don't usually make notes after meeting a friend, but for some reason I did on this occasion.

Ted told me his mum had been a secretary. She was, in his words, "lower middle class with aspirations".

He described his dad as "a bit of a buccaneer", who had left his mum before Ted was born, but had been good to Ted in later life.

Both Ted's parents had died in their forties: his father had committed suicide, and his mother had died from peritonitis following an appendectomy.

He told me that their early deaths had changed his life, and that he would not have met me and his other friends if they hadn't died when they did, as this had prompted him to move to Hampstead.

I feel privileged to be able to give you this information, sparse though it is, and I am very glad that I made of a note of it.

\* \* \*

Ted's life is at an end, but what a life it was! He worked at least as hard as anyone I've known.

Until he retired last year, he would begin his day's work in the signal box while the rest of us were sound asleep.

He did an important job, with responsibility for lives and property. I well remember how hard he trained for this work, which he took very seriously and did very professionally.

The job of a signalman can be quite physical, but after his shift ended he would undertake the even more physically demanding work of gardening and car washing.

Despite the long hours of labour, he kept all his friendships in good repair.

He did numerous acts of kindness for elderly neighbours and friends who needed his care and attention.

He played as hard as he worked, socialising often, and frequently visiting his friends in various parts of England.

More recently he acquired a taste for foreign holidays in the sun.

Ted's charitable impulses, and his many good deeds, are a model for all of us, and certainly for me.

And I shall always be grateful for the invaluable help and support which Ted gave me during our long friendship.

Time eventually may close the gap in my life which Ted's passing has left, but as the years go by I shall need no recordings or photographs to recall in tranquility, and with the utmost clarity, his voice and his image.

I have spoken of my own feelings and recollections about Ted, but I believe I can speak for every one of us when I say that for as long as we live, the good which he did, and the force of his personality, will keep safe his immortal memory.