

## Tribute to Ted

This short poem was written by my mum some 20 years ago.

### Signalman

My friend of many years works six days a week  
as two-handed signalman for what was once  
British Rail, alone in his signal box,  
almost a second home.  
His books are there, pen and paper,  
a cushion to ease his lot.  
A stray cat visits when in the mood.  
He talks to it as to an equal.  
Eyes and ears always on the alert  
to keep the track safe.  
Yet the wide-ranging encapsulating mind  
wryly observes – secondary occupation -  
a world moving towards collision  
all signals ignored.

Ted spanned 4 generations of my family, which must be something of a record: my parents, Nat and Renee; myself and David; my brother Geoffrey and his wife Judy; my children, Andy and Rachel, who are both here today; and my grandchildren, Oscar aged 7, who is also here, and Abigail who is almost 5.

Ted came into my life 46 years ago and has remained an important part of it ever since. He was without doubt the most challenging of my friends but also the most generous, vital, inspirational and, as young Oscar firmly maintains, the most fun. He was also wonderfully supportive. When David suffered a massive stroke at the age of 55 the person who visited him in hospital more often than anyone else except myself was Ted. And when David died 5 years later Ted was on the doorstep with a hug that nearly squeezed the breath out of me.

We shared a passion for music and for writing. The last few times he stayed with me in Felixstowe we spent hours every day reading and discussing each other's respective works. Ted was an astute critic but never unkind or negative. Also he was able to accept criticism himself and be grateful for it. I rejoice in Ted's life. The spark of his spirit ignited mine.

I'll leave the last few words to Ted, a note written after his stay with me just last month and which I shall treasure for the rest of my life. It is so very Ted.

Dear Beryl & Jenny (Jenny's my dog),

Thanks, thanks and thank you. Let's get that over with first. I am so lucky to be able to count you as a real and active friend. Great. And great that we both write and love classical music! And – a great underrated asset – we can both be silent for ages too! in the same room.

Anyway look forward to seeing you in the summer and hearing the rest of the novel. By then I will be at least partly moved into the retirement flat and the reactions to my play – well there might be some by then? Who knows?

In the meanwhile I suspect that the weather will change considerably – today in London is a wonderful spring day. So when I see you next it might find us complaining of the heat. In the meanwhile THANKS again and love to Jenny & you from TED.

(PS. Love to all your family please.)