

6th April, 2020

This has been such a strange experience – to be apart from dad, and from one another, as he goes on his journey and yet to be so powerfully drawn together in our love and grief.

Thank you for sharing your stories, pictures and feelings about dad. It's helping us and I hope it helps you too, to remember him with us. We'd love to continue to share memories and promise to do something fitting when we come out of quarantine.

For now, I just want to say something about dad as I experienced him, as his younger daughter.

I always saw him as very intentional – determined to live his best life. From a young age, I could see that still waters ran very deep in dad.

Just as mum brought him abundant happiness (according to Charles Gillis, even his face changed when he met her), so did Valerie. And he could laugh like a drain – I remember dinner parties at Summertrees during which someone said something that amused him so much that the noise woke me from my slumber.

I loved that he could be open to all of life, even though he was extremely disciplined in his approach to it (the discipline was not a trait I inherited, sadly). It's one of the things I appreciated most about him.

Not that I didn't respect him for being a trail-blazing physician; if that was all he achieved: dayenu – that would have sufficed.

He and mum were both organisers – they built community, joined campaigns, took on exceptional challenges: while mum struggled with her cello, dad battled with his bassoon – the cacophony was quite enchanting.

And then they got into Egyptology in a big way: never ones to go lightly into a subject, they let this hobby become a vocation.

So yes, I think we would all want to celebrate dad's accomplishments and the modest way he went about being 'eminent' for sure.

But many of you have commented on how amazing he was at 'husbanding' and 'fathering' – he deserved huge respect for that: he was before his time in terms of gender equality but despite that, I was not an easy daughter for him, and mum could sometimes be incredibly exacting. One weekend she decided that NOW was the time to move the upright piano from the front of the house to the back, via a very narrow passageway through which it barely fit. I think he got off relatively lightly with Sarah.

The reason why he was so great at husbanding and fathering, and in the last few years, relationshiping with Valerie is because he had a very good and true heart.

When mum died, he unzipped his emotional straight-jacket, all the way past those intolerable yet endured years of mum's illness down to his grief for the children whose lives he had been unable to save as a physician. He took to mindfulness practice as a way of living with his emotional load without encumbering others.

As a younger man, he learned transcendental meditation – primarily as a way of relaxing during his intensely difficult years as a hospital doctor. Through it, the doors of his perception were flung wide open. He began to see and understand all sorts of things, including his at the time strained relationship with me, which resulted in him opening up to me in ways that I will never see as anything short of miraculous.

Dad and I talked a lot over the years about all manner of things, inner and outer, intellectual and emotional, spiritual and political, ethical and cultural. His robustness in the face of just about anything meant that he was always one of the first people I would want to share my thoughts, ideas and feelings with. I was often met with a raised eyebrow or a slightly off-beam comment that got me thinking more deeply.

Sarah and I stand on the shoulders of giants. Our parents' had a deep sense of knowing what is important. They gave me in particular the freedom to rebel and then to come back to them. As with the imaginal cells that form the butterfly, but which any good caterpillar first resists so that the cells get stronger, I carry their intention within me for always, until my last breath and pass all that I can on to Leo.

I have told a few of you this already but on dad's last living day, I walked him – via a deep meditation – to the spot behind our house in Applethwaite where the ferns met the brackens at a little stream at the foot of mount Skiddaw. I have spent time with him there every day since he died. He used to tell me that 'this is where g-d' lives: may it be so.