

A Ceremony to Celebrate the Life of



BRYANT MORGAN

1946 – 2010

Monday 15th November 2010

10.15am at 15 Madox Street

11.15am at Glyntaf Crematorium

Celebrant: Kate Weston (British Humanist Association)

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OPENING MUSIC – “Apache” by The Shadows

Croeso and welcome.

Hello, my name is Kate and I'm a celebrant from the British Humanist Association.

Our ceremony today is an opportunity to gather together to celebrate the life and the personality that has been. In Bryant Morgan's case a hard working life and a big hearted personality. As Bryant had no conventional religious beliefs his family have chosen a non-religious ceremony, one which reflects Bryant's strong belief in living life to the full but not at the expense of others.

You might think that the word “celebration” is a strange choice when used at a funeral, but Bryant's family are today celebrating his life force.

You will hear some of his favourite music and a tribute I have put together from listening to Denvra, Stephen and Tracey talking about him.

Later in the ceremony there will be a time for quiet reflection.

It will be an opportunity for those who wish to say a prayer.

It is natural to be sad today, because one of the kindest, happiest people you know has gone, twenty years or so before he should. But to live life to the full for 64 years is something to be thankful for.

I don't think that there is anyone here who doesn't feel the better for having known Bryant. He will be remembered for his generosity, for his underlying, quiet thoughtfulness and for his love of music.

TRIBUTE

Bryant was born in 1946 in Penygraig, to parents Morgan and Ruth from Trealaŵ. He had two brothers Davy and John, both many years older than him. Davy at 16 years older was responsible for suggesting Bryant, having spotted the name on the top of a box of matches.

His father Morgan had taken all his own brothers and sisters to London to improve the family prospects but when war broke out, brought his sister Jinny and niece Jean back to Wales for their safety.

He had worked in the team digging the foundations for Ford's Dagenham factory and back in Wales he went down the pit. He also did a stint as a bookies runner, acting as an early warning of "rozzers" arriving to break up the gambling ring, as it was illegal at that time.

His mother Ruth was the classic valleys matriarch; very much a lady. She was never known to swear or drink and disapproved strongly of her dear boys being drunk. As was traditional she was highly respected and her word was law. The family adored her.

We get an insight into Bryant's school life from his reports - at Dinas County Junior School in 1956, his report reads "English subjects weak. Must work much harder and read more at home" (underlined in red).

But by the time he went to Craig yr Eos in 1960, things were looking up, "a very good effort indeed".

His ambition, when he bought his first guitar, was to make a breakthrough with his band.

In 1965 the Rhondda Leader reported that "the future is rosy for the Zendars and went on to describe their triumphs in the Ocean Club, Cardiff, the Palace, Merthyr and the dizzy heights of the Regent Ballroom, Hopkinstown. The band had been formed of teenage school friends Nipper Poulton (16), Mike Smith (18), Dai Maber (18) and of course Bryant (18).

Their sights were set on stardom. They had two or three engagements some weeks and they aimed to win the Melody Maker beat music competition in London. They supported both The Who and The Applejacks. It looked as if fame was beckoning but a slice of real life grounded the boys in the late sixties.

Bryant had an eye for pretty girls and went from admiring Denvra's ankles to asking her out - to a dance at the Library Club, Llywnypia. She was 15 years old and they had already fallen for each other. He had made Denvra laugh when they were courting by telling her she had bagged him by being a "groupie", but in truth the young couple were both ready and keen to settle down.

They had met working at the "bag factory" and were talking about getting married but decided to wait a year so that they could buy an upmarket model of car instead. Fate intervened and in 1966 they were married, when Denvra was 19 and Bryant (complete with leather jacket) was 20. The Zendars played at the reception (at the NUM in Tonypandy), and Stephen arrived six months later.

At that point any aspirations for a GT model of car morphed into a need for a family-friendly Ford Cortina.

Bryant made a marvellous young husband and father. After a further three and a half years Tracey was born to complete the picture.

The kids remember many happy family holidays, camping with groups of family and friends in huge house tents – in places such as Llangorse, Saundersfoot and Porthcawl.

Bryant's first job was labouring. He then drove a Davis's pop lorry and in 1973 worked behind a bar for the first time.

He enjoyed this career in numerous pubs and clubs for 35 years until 2008, when he retired from the Llwynypia WMC (the Dog and Muff). It was hard slog - double shifts, hours on his feet, physical work - but it suited him tremendously as he was such an incredibly hard worker.

In 1983 he and Denvra moved to London - to Islington and then Pimlico, where they managed the Carved Red Lion and later the Queen of Denmark. Frequent visitors were Denvra's lifelong friend Norma and her husband John. They were in the big smoke for seven years and found the village atmosphere in Pimlico suited them down to the ground.

Not that they were ever short of Welsh visitors. Fifty two rugby fans descended on them for one international.

Denvra remembers two barmaids and eighteen fellas sharing one room.

One set of visitors triggered off a bout of hiraeth for Denvra. She cried her eyes out to the heartfelt singing of a choir from Swansea.

Bryant set himself up with an “office” in the basement, at least that’s what the sign on the door said. It certainly had a desk and chairs but it also had the odd few bottles and any number of mates who’d help him to drink them. Denvra meanwhile would be slogging away upstairs.

The children had stayed at home in the Rhondda, each choosing to live with a different grandmother. Stephen’s thinking was that he had started studying for exams, while Tracey was simply reluctant to live in London or leave South Wales. Once, on a gut feeling that Stephen wasn’t well, Denvra rushed back to Wales to find that her intuition was right.

Bryant loved his cars, buying gas guzzlers such as Zodiacs and Zephyrs.

He also fell for the new technology of eight-track cartridges. Those of us old enough to remember these monsters can appreciate that the music on a long car journey could be a bit repetitive, as there was never enough space to store more than two or three. So, as the music was always on in the car, Neil Diamond and Neil Sedaka got plenty of airtime, with the kids soon learning the words to "Oh Carol" and "The Flying Purple People Eater" !

Music was tremendously important to Bryant and his tastes were wide ranging. He was heavy on rock and roll and swing, with Connie Francis, Dean Martin and of course Tom Jones featuring heavily in his collection. On one house move he threw out huge quantities of tapes and LPs – to the delight of a music mad neighbour.

When I asked who might play Bryant in the film of his life, Denvra suggested Billy Fury for his leather jackets, his muscular build and his quiff. Both kids separately and without knowing each other's answers picked James Dean for his leather jackets, his moody look and his quiff.

Bryant and Denvra were in London when Tracey and her husband Dean had Kirstie. Bryant doted on his granddaughter. The feeling was mutual; Tracey and Kirstie had him wrapped round their little fingers.

They were an incredibly close family unit. With encouragement from their parents and grandparents, Stephen and Tracey have done well for themselves – they both joined banks and Stephen has followed his dad's footsteps as a concert performer in Spain. Bryant was incredibly proud of them both, with actions speaking louder than any words. The kids have the utmost respect for both their parents.

What was Bryant's greatest achievement ? We could say his children; but actually, let's suggest his band as he would relive his youth on air guitar whenever the music was playing and wherever he happened to be.

You may not know that Bryant was a charity shop enthusiast – which could be a euphemism for being a hoarder and a magpie. The takings at Oxfam and Tenovus must have plummeted in the last few weeks.

He was such a regular, the staff would spot things he might like and set them aside. Oxfam even sent him a Christmas card. He has passed his enthusiasm on to Stephen – who would plunder his father's wardrobe when came home.

"Bryant put his stamp on him", no doubt about it.

His collectables included wrist watches, of which he had about forty. They were no real use to him, but they were such bargains he could hardly leave them in the shop. He'd always had a thing for leather jackets and had accumulated seven of them.

In the famous words of Princess Di "there were three of them in the marriage". Denvra, Bryant and their dear friend Dorothy (Dean's mother) were inseparable. People called Dorothy and Denvra "Hinge and Bracket". Denvra would like to thank Dorothy for supporting them so brilliantly over the years, none more so than in the last few weeks. The girls would go out every Wednesday to Porthcawl and Bryant would send them out looking for bargains, "have a look for this when you go down".

Bryant and Denvra had stayed in Spain with Stephen and his partner Nick (at their home in the hills near Estepona), arriving there washed-out but coming home with a spring in their step.

His mother-in-law Annie was particularly fond of Bryant – and holidayed with them in the Caribbean. She was so determined to go that even a broken shoulder couldn't stop her.

Latterly, Denvra hadn't been too well, and when Bryant had three minor strokes which slowed him down, she suggested that he retire aged 62. He had been such an incredibly hard worker he was reluctant to take this step. As he said "I won't know what to do with myself, I wanted to work until I was 65", something which was so cruelly denied him.

He was never going to sit around doing nothing and so he took up gardening. He was steadily filling his back garden with pots and garden decorations which the girls brought back from Porthcawl. He had finally found some time for himself and these last couple of years were a joy to Denvra, as their relationship was revitalised. Denvra told me that she wouldn't have changed any part of her life with Bryant.

He hadn't changed much from the underlying shy bloke she had fallen for. In the hospital, the doctor would ask him a question and he would turn to Denvra and tell her to answer.

Disastrously, on 1st October this year he was diagnosed with lung and bone cancer just a few days before the three amigos were due to go to Porthcawl for a caravanning holiday, (a bargain that Bryant had found in The Sun). He was so looking forward to it, that following his discharge from hospital they went for the remaining part of the week. It was the best decision ever. They were joined by Dean and Tracey and had a marvellous time there. His course of radiotherapy was to follow the week after. Sadly once completed, Bryant deteriorated rapidly, dying on 4th November aged only 64.

The family have today attempted to give Bryant the send off that he would have wanted and hopefully it is bringing a smile to his face. They are very proud of him and know that wherever he is, he is still singing!!!

REFLECTION

At this point, after hearing something about Bryant's life we come to a moment for quiet reflection, where you will be able to remember the man that you knew and loved. We'll listen to Summertime by The Drifters, which the family always remember him singing.

REFLECTIVE MUSIC – “Summertime” by The Drifters

We've reached the part of the ceremony where we are going to say goodbye to Bryant. Would you please stand if you are able to do so?

Today we have looked back with fondness and pride at a life well-lived. Bryant's influence, his attitudes and his values will remain with you who were closest to him and in this way he will always be part of your lives.

We are sad for his death, but in gratitude for his life we remember Bryant, his accomplishments, his generosity and his love for his family.

His memory is already safely committed into the hearts of those closest to him. So now, with inescapable sorrow but also with gratitude, pride, affection and enduring love we say goodbye to Bryant Morgan - so that he can rejoin the elements from which all life comes and to which all life will return. We may be leaving his physical body behind but we are taking away the consolation of his life.

MUSIC “All I have to do is Dream” by The Everly Brothers

When special family occasions arrive, think of Bryant and speak of him – not sadly with thoughts of what you have lost, but happily as you recall the memories and the legacy of his life that you haven’t lost and will never lose.

Thank you for being here today to celebrate his life and to show him the respect that he deserves.

We’ll now listen to Stephen’s tribute in the song “To Where You Are” which says everything he wants to say to his beloved Daddy.

MUSIC “To Where You Are” sung by Stephen Lloyd-Morgan

In conclusion, on behalf of Denvra, Stephen, Tracey and their families, I want to thank everyone who has offered sympathy and support at this sad time.

Denvra would very much like to thank Dean for all the help and care he has shown to Bryant – although it always seemed somehow to involve a beer. She would also like to thank Nick for supporting Stephen, particularly at times when he has really needed it.

The family would like to thank you for your floral tributes and have placed a box on the way out for any donations you might like to make, which will go to a cancer charity.

Please do join them afterwards at The Turbeville in Penygraig to raise a glass and share your memories of the legend that was Bryant Morgan.

Thank you all, go safely.

CLOSING MUSIC “Only You” by The Platters