

## **Eulogy for Dad**

I have only 10 minutes to describe who my father was. It is very difficult, and I put together a book with his photographs and more information about him.

I didn't know my parents very well until they came to live with me and Richard nearly 8 years ago. Of course, I knew Dad was very intelligent, achieved MSc in Electrical Engineering, then Doctors Degree and Assistant Professor.

I left Poland when I was 23 after my degree and they were just parents ordering, helping, praising for successes and criticising for failures. Dad was heavy smoker and since living through hell in the concentration camp non-believer. However, he went to church for all the main occasions and as we had an altar outside our house for Corpus Christi (Boze Cialo), which is a Catholic feast celebrated as a public holiday in Poland, he was a full participant of that.

As he was one of the altar attending boys when he was young he knew all the hymns and prayers.

He expected us to celebrate Christmas properly according to the Catholic traditions and he would have never missed visiting all the Christ graves at most churches in Warsaw on Easter Saturdays or eating any meat until I went and blessed the food on Easter Saturday morning. That is what they do in Poland and here in Polish churches.

When I had any problems with doing my maths homework he would give me a hint and then would keep me trying by myself until I completed the task. Once I was doing it till 4am when I finally succeeded. He always told me "You have to find the answer yourself, that is life".

Those are my memories from when I left them and came to England. Of course, he visited me here with mum and on his own and I went there for two weeks every year but that was just a holiday time. You don't get to know people during visits. You are just frantically busy.

Ten years ago, my mum had an operation on her head and started to fall and hurt herself and my dad had a few operations himself. I was travelling to Poland more and more often. Dad was saying he cannot cope and is very depressed.

Richard in his wisdom, suggested we bring them to England so that we could look after them.

We changed the house, so we could have a long en-suite room and Richard put a suggestion to my father, who jumped to the opportunity straight away.

My mum took some persuasion, as she didn't want to leave all her family behind. But Dad can be very persuasive, and so they came to England in April of 2010.

That was when I started to know my father.

He didn't smoke any more but had bad problems with his stomach. During the first year he still ventured out but eventually was bound to the house. It took him 24 hours preparation to leave the house, so he cut it to essentials: dentist, opticians, hospital visits.

Surprisingly he also listened every Sunday with mum to the mass from Polish radio and stopped saying that God can't possibly exist.

He was just wonderful to have around the house, ever helpful and carried on looking after mum till his heart attack in October 2017.

Till then I tried to give them as much independence as they could take.

We agreed with Dad on lots of things and chatted for hours. Mum bought me a dog and dad just loved little Daisy and said he could at last understand all those people, he thought crazy before, who love their dogs.

One day I felt very bad about life and Richard being always helpful did my Rotary duty. My mum went to visit her friend from the Polish Club for a meal.

When I came back home much earlier than I should had, Dad came downstairs and ask me what was wrong with me. I told him, and he brought down the small amount of brandy he had, poured it for us and I put some snacks on the kitchen table and we had a heart to heart. He told me during that time that I am here through pure luck as he nearly died after being captured by Germans.

Once when he had to carry heavy stones up the 'Hill of Death' in Mauthasen concentration camp. The guard didn't like the size of the stone he was carrying and told him to pick up the one which was impossible for one person to carry. Fortunately, the guard was called off.

While he was away dad picked up a manageable but bigger stone and mingled with other prisoners. As they all had their head shaved and wore blue striped pyjamas the guard lost the track of him.

The second time was when they transported him to a factory in Vienna as he had an engineering background. One of the machines wasn't working and they told him if he didn't repair it he was dead. He didn't have a clue, fortunately one of the Russian prisoners told him that machine was sabotaged, and the circuit was connected in Delta instead of the star. Those of you with the engineering

background will know what that meant. He quickly changed the circuit and survived.

The third time when they walked 160 km in their pyjamas and clogs from Vienna to the concentration camp Gusen. Many prisoners died from dehydration, malnutrition and problems with their feet. Who couldn't walk was shot and left by the road side. Dad survived and made the destination, but only just. The man he befriended fell down and Dad was going to help him. The guard pulled the trigger and aimed at him but again there was some disruption and dad quickly moved on, encouraging his friend with words to "carry on, see you in the camp".

There was a fourth time when the Americans released them from Gusen and gave them bean soup. Many people died as their stomachs couldn't take such rich food, Dad's stomach never really recovered.

You cannot blame me that on that evening I brought another half bottle of brandy and mum and Richard found us a bit tipsy for the first and the last time while Dad was with us.

Dad was wonderful and died as he wished peacefully and by complete chance in my arms.

He will join my little sister in the mum's family grave at Powazki in Warsaw.