

Eulogy: Alan Maurice Large, by Rev. Margaret Kirk

Maurice was brought up in High Heaton, Newcastle. He was the youngest of two sons. He attended Cragside School before passing the entrance exam to the Junior School of the Royal Grammar School following the same path as his brother, Roy three years before him. He subsequently passed the exam to the senior school.

Roy tells me, he joined the cubs and then the scouts and took part in at least one of the Gang Shows at either the Theatre Royal or the Empire.

He had a musical upbringing. His mother sang in the Bach choir. He took piano lessons and later violin lessons at school where he was in the First orchestra, the most advanced of the 3 orchestras that the school offered their musical students.

He performed in the annual 6th Form play which in his year was the Merchant of Venice. His brother had performed 3 years previously in The Tempest, both cast in female roles – it was, we should remember, an all boys' school.

For a period of time Maurice was a member of the People's Theatre in Newcastle and appeared in some of their productions.

Maurice and Joan met in 1962 at the Unitarian Church of the Divine Unity in Newcastle. Maurice was a member of the Unitarian Young People's League. It was there that Joan met Maurice when they were both attending a Unitarian conference. In the previous year Joan had moved from her home in Bury to become a student at Sunderland Teacher Training College.

In 1968 they were married at Bury Unitarian Church.

Andrew was born in 1969 and Malcolm in 1977. They lived in the Gosforth area throughout their married life.

Andrew remembers late night discussions with his father when they put the world to rights and Malcolm recalls being taken to the cinema at around the age of 7 to see back -to -back films of Superman which thrilled him. He also remembers Maurice taking the young people from church to the cinema to see a Christmas film, followed by a meal at their house.

Andrew's children, Zoe and Emma were very close to their grandad and even whilst in hospital when Maurice was very frail, Joan remembers how he took pleasure in doing crosswords with Zoe.

Following a brief period teaching history at a private school in Morpeth, Maurice studied to become an articled clerk over a period of five years. This involved attending various courses at a College of Law. Shortly after

qualifying he worked for the solicitors Mitchell Dodds where he specialized in Litigation Law.

In the 1990s he became a District Judge and worked as a judge for 15 years in the County Court in North Shields until he retired in 2016. His photo is still on the wall at Kings Court .in his District Judge regalia.

One of his colleagues has said that he was very proud to serve the people of North Shields and became known affectionately as 'The Sheriff of the North.' She described him as being a kind, encouraging and patient guide; always courteous and fair and resolute where necessary'. He was always able to give support and she adds 'he reminds me of how to be a better judge.'

Another colleague remembers him from when he was articled at Mitchell Dodds and says 'he was a fine man and a very good lawyer...devoted to Joan and his sons.'

Maurice was a keen badminton player and he shared his love of badminton with both his boys when they were teenagers. Joan recalls times when she first met him spending many Saturday nights in cold church halls. Maurice was an essential player in the church badminton team and also one of the first boys at his school to play badminton when it became an official school sport.

Maurice very much enjoyed motoring. Driving to France for family holidays was one of the family's great pleasures. It was something Maurice and Joan continued doing and enjoying after the boys had left home. Maurice liked his cars and was a member of the Institute of Advanced motorists.

As a younger man, he'd spent some of his time hiking which on one occasion led to a rather bizarre incident when he and his friend were questioned briefly in connection with the Great Train Robbery. His son Andrew recalls him saying that whilst hiking in Ireland, he and a friend had slept in a bus shelter and were woken to a forest of policemen's legs,'. The police questioned them: Who were they? Where had they come from? And presumably were satisfied that they were not accomplices in that audacious heist of 1966.

The other thing that Maurice enjoyed was jazz – Maybe a surprise to a few people. Since retiring, he'd joined a Friday lunchtime jazz gathering organized by the Lit & Phil and one year he and Joan enjoyed a trip to the Edinburgh Jazz Festival.

Maurice was a loyal member of the Unitarian Church of the Divine Unity. His father had been treasurer there for 40 years and Maurice was on the management committee for 50 years which involved regular stints as both

their Chairperson and secretary. It's no exaggeration to say he was the backbone of the church, hugely respected and greatly valued. His presence had a warmth and a quiet authority and he was always welcoming. I remember those qualities on all those occasions when I took a service at the church.

It was quite common for him to attend church on Sunday, be back there for a committee meeting on the Monday and be playing badminton there on Thursday evening.

In earlier times, he and his mother would visit the church on a Saturday evening when she went to do the flowers, as a result of which Maurice became a good flower arranger himself.

On the back page of your order of service, you'll notice that the charity the family have chosen for donations, is The Northern Brainwave Appeal. Maurice set this charity up in 1988 when he was working as a solicitor. He continued as a trustee until he became ill and attended regular meetings which involved travelling to Carlisle.

The charity spends its money for the purchase of medical equipment for the high dependency unit at Newcastle General Hospital and this is to help those in the Neurosciences Department with complex neurological disorders.

As with so much of the work that Maurice undertook, it stands as another example of his loyalty, his devotion and his commitment.

Margaret Kirk 9th February 2023