

In Loving Memory of

Geoffrey Courtney Evans

29th March 1951 - 21st June 2020



Funeral Service at
Thornhill Crematorium Briwnant Chapel
on Friday 3rd July 2020 12.00pm

Officiant: Father Mark Greenaway-Robbins

Music On Entry

Nimrod - Edward Elgar

Hymn

Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer
Tune Cwm Rhondda

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream shall flow;
Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer
Be thou still my strength and shield.
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever sing to thee
I will ever sing to thee
O, am aros! O, am aros!
Yn Ei gariad ddyddiau f'oes!
Yn Ei gariad ddyddiau f'oes!

Solo by Gilly Bradshaw



Hymn

I Bob Un Sydd Ffyddlon
Tune Rachie

I bob un sydd ffyddlon
Dan Ei faner Ef
Mae gan Iesu goron
Fry yn nheyrnas nef
Lluoedd Duw a Satan
Sydd yn cwrdd yn awr:
Mae gan blant eu cyfran
Yn y rhyfel mawr.

Awn i gwrdd y gelyn,
Bawb ag arfau glân;
Uffern sydd i'n herbyn
A'i phicellau tân.
Gwasgwn yn y rhengau,
Ac edrychwn fry;
Concwrwr byd ac angau
Acw sydd o'n tu!

Exit music

Like a Rolling Stone - Bob Dylan





Donations in lieu of flowers for St David's Hospice
or Cancer Research may be may be sent to Piper Funeral Services.
4 The Square, Abertridwr, Caerphilly

Piper Funeral Services

Independent Family Funeral Directors
Caerphilly

02920 862258/ 831101

Eulogy for Geoffrey Courtney Evans (29 March 1951 - 21 June 2020)

Delivered at Briwnant Chapel, Thornhill, Cardiff, on 3 July 2020

Geoff was born to Tegwen and Leonard Evans in March 1951 and raised on the family farm at Nant-y-Calch in Caerphilly with his two younger siblings, Gillian and Ceri. His sisters remember a thoughtful and studious brother, with a competitive streak in evidence from the outset, particularly when it came to board games, and an emerging interest in cards encouraged by his mother who was keen on Whist. Being a family business all three children helped on the farm and the milk-round, and they grew to know the community in Caerphilly from an early age.

Geoff attended Caerphilly Boys' Grammar School, where he made a number of lifelong friends. Having shown particular aptitude in the sciences, he went on to study Agriculture to Master's level at Reading University and enjoyed his time there greatly. The academic work was stimulating, and his group of friends made at Wantage Hall lived together throughout university and remained in close and regular contact for fifty years.

Some of Geoff's family – and indeed friends made later in life – may be surprised to learn that, amongst this university friendship group, the terms 'theoreticals' and 'practicals' did not refer to serious laboratory science. No, they were the codenames of different venues for drinking excursions. By all accounts, such adventures did not cease entirely after graduation: when Geoff was best man for a friend in 1973, he spent the wedding night sleeping in the front hedge of the Groom's parents' house, having lost his keys. Forty years later, Geoff was astounded to be presented with those same long-lost keys by the Groom's father, who had re-discovered them during a hard pruning! Geoff was amazed that the keys had been remembered after all those years, but to the Groom it was another indication of how fondly his parents felt about their son's friend and best man.

After leaving Reading University, Geoff worked for three years in Saudi Arabia, establishing a new dairy enterprise on an enormous scale compared to that of the family farm, followed by a spell at a commercial dairy in Newcastle Emlyn in mid-Wales. Geoff returned to Caerphilly, and after his father's death in 1985 took on the family farm and the milk-round, which he ran in partnership for thirty years with his late mother, and where he remained for the rest of his working life. Geoff would be out in all weathers with the cattle or delivering milk to his customers come rain or shine, sleet or snow. At this time the milk-round covered the whole Caerphilly basin and involved both his mother and sister. Geoff's milk customers could depend on him, and often became good friends; over the years he became regarded as something of a fixture in the local community.

Geoff had discovered Bridge whilst at university, and soon began to play more regularly in and around Cardiff. He made his international debut in 1976 and played successfully in many competitions, ultimately attaining the status of Grand Master. Long-standing playing partners and friends from the Cardiff Bridge Club describe Geoff as a talented, thoughtful and analytical player who strove for the best from every hand. Competitive until the end, in 2020 he won the East Wales Bridge Association's coveted *Victor Ludorum* award. His wider contribution to the governance of Bridge came through membership and chairmanship of various committees of the Welsh Bridge Union and the regional association. In a lasting legacy, Geoff initiated a stand for Bridge at the Cardiff University Freshers' Fair - a first - which recruited many young players and ensured a promising future for the game in Wales.

It was also through Cardiff Bridge Club in the 1970s that Geoff met Isabel, reportedly when her Cardiff 'B' team beat his Cardiff 'A' team in two successive competition finals. That certainly got Geoff's attention. They were married in 1985 and a year later Hannah was born. Geoff and Isabel continued their shared love of Bridge during thirty years of marriage, winning the Welsh National Mixed Teams competition together in 2011.

For Geoff, Bridge wasn't just about the competition, and he will be warmly remembered both for his pantomimes and his speeches. Geoff really was a gifted and very funny public speaker, with a natural delivery and seemingly off-hand timing that belied hours spent drafting and perfecting his notes. Perhaps Geoff's best oratory was reserved for Hannah and Phil's wedding in October 2016, where his pride and joy at a match that so thoroughly delighted him nevertheless came amidst grief, having lost Isabel so suddenly earlier that year. In that bittersweet moment, Geoff drew on all his experience and held things together just long enough to bring the house down. It was by common consent an outstanding and hilarious father-of-the-bride speech.

Throughout his life, Geoff was also an avid sports fan, and he was particularly dedicated to Cardiff City Football Club and Glamorgan County Cricket Club. It was said that Geoff had the ability simultaneously to listen to BBC Test Match Special, to watch a football game and to read the sports pages of the newspaper. He followed most sports and so, coupled with his extraordinary ability to absorb and recall information, Geoff was not only a formidable Bridge player but also well worth having on your quiz team.

Geoff and Isabel quizzed at the Green Lady pub together for over 15 years; the tougher the quiz, the greater the emphasis on geography, history or literature, the more affinity he had for it. Undoubtedly Geoff's finest quizzing hour came as a member of the Green Lady team that qualified to appear on the BBC's *Eggheads*. Geoff had been detailed to cover geography, duly the subject for Round 2. With little hesitation, Geoff answered his first three questions correctly before his opponent, Daphne Fowler, a winner of *Brain of Britain* and *15-to-1*, got one wrong! Returning victorious to his seat, there was a pronounced spring in Geoff's step and a grin as wide as the River Taff: after all, he had just handed the legendary Daphne her first ever *Eggheads* defeat on geography! The team ultimately left empty-handed, but this was an achievement of which Geoff remained suitably, but modestly, proud. He was happy to return to the satisfaction of local competition, with his wife, daughter and son-in-law, and was active

in playing and writing quizzes until the start of lockdown this year. While Geoff always kept score to ensure he hadn't been wrongly docked half a point here or there, he often stressed that, while winning was nice, the real joy was in learning.

Another of Geoff's many interests and quiz specialities was Art. He filled shelf upon shelf with a vast collection of books on the History of Art. This passion led to a part-time return to academic study, through Cardiff University's Extra-Mural Studies department, where Geoff was delighted to receive the first ever Distinction awarded in the Art History Diploma. In 2008, a Leonard Cohen concert in Amsterdam afforded Geoff and Isabel an unmissable opportunity to visit the Rijksmuseum, the Dutch masters being a particular soft spot. Having collected guidebooks to many of the world's leading galleries through the travels of family and friends, principally Isabel and Hannah, Geoff had hoped to see for himself more of those great works about which he knew so much, after his retirement from farming.

In closing, the family has asked me to pay special tribute to the district nurses and carers who supported them in looking after Geoff with such compassion during his illness. They wish to thank the extended family, friends, customers and neighbours for their support: for the many messages of sympathy; for help on the farm at this difficult time; for joining this service remotely amidst all the current restrictions; and for paying their respects along the route of the funeral cortège this morning. Geoff will be remembered as someone of great humour, intellect and kindness; a true gentleman. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him, having enriched the lives of so many. May he rest in peace.