

Allan Wright Spence b. 27 Nov 1936 d. 4 Jan 2026

Allan Wright Spence, who died peacefully in this sleep last week, was the last generation to carry the name of Wright's brandy snap, a popular fairground food that had long since disappeared into another branch of the family. Allan lost all his teeth as a teenager to contraband wartime supply of sweets (jujubes and suchlike) during the War years that was somehow still available to the fairground community. His catchphrase in later life was to say that: "All I ever wanted was to have the chance to be Tommy Steele" – the latter, a famous entertainer in the middle decades of the last century, born just a few weeks after my father. He used this phrase, I think, to justify why he and his wife Norah took the momentous decision to leave the fairground on marrying. Their hope was to try and avoid the discrimination against such itinerant folk who inhabited the liminal space that forms the basis for the attached piece from the so-called 'flatties' (those living in static accommodation). Their desire was successful, inasmuch as relentless hard work, and self-sacrifice, throughout their lives helped to provide their children Simon, Allison and Charles, formerly known as Jason), and their granddaughters Bea and Becky, with all the opportunities (and education) in life that they themselves never had. At the same time, however, they ended-up paying a heavy price, effectively being ex-communicated by the rest of the fairground community with whom they had spent their early years.

Always positive, never angry, if frequently grumpy with the way the world was going, Allan, aka 'Oddjob' to his loving daughter-in-law Barbara, was always willing, even at almost 90 years of age, to get down on his hands and knees try and fix anything, and everything, that needed repairing. Never one to take a short cut, his approach always involved significant amounts of sanding before applying several coats of undercoat. And while a notoriously bad cook when his wife was alive, Allan learned to enjoy preparing healthy meals from scratch, not for him the ultraprocessed pre-packaged meals of today's younger folk. And while Allan was of the generation who found it difficult to express their emotions verbally, he always managed to show his love through the meals that he would prepare and the new recipes that he enjoyed scouring recipe books for: Most popular with his daughter in law, and her mother, the caramelized onion tarte and *feuillette* that became his signature dishes. The latter famous even in Santandercito, Colombia, where he would visit regularly in his later years (finding many female friends and even an admirer in the village along the way).

Thursday nights were always spent in the company of his two sons, Simon and Charles, at their regular North Oxford pub/curry night. Although Allan's decline was rapid, and his memory for the early part of his life was patchy at best, the last couple of such evenings were spent happily trying to put names and dates to the photos that appear in the foregoing article. Although our requests for information sometimes frustrated him, his frequent, albeit exasperated refrain, was always: "I can't bloody remember!" At the time, Allan was still full of life and *joie de vivre*, forever drawing attention to himself by standing up to tell his one and only joke to anyone who would listen – the one about the three little boys, a Ferrari, and a prostitute at Simon's Worton Kitchen Garden restaurant. Here, he would always enjoy ordering off the menu, asking for the 'Chef's special', putting his faith in his son's culinary, if not necessarily in his pecuniary, skills.

Always careful to look after himself, Allan meticulously ensured that he got his 5,10-000 steps a day, and tried to keep the old grey cells active by playing bridge every day despite his never better than mediocre performance. This was a place where he was accepted for who he was, not where he came from. He was careful to pepper his diet with blueberries for breakfast, lentils, and oily fish later in the day, because he thought they were healthy, and did almost everything (except

perhaps for the steady flow of red wine) to keep his mind and body in tip-top condition for his age and stage of life.

In death, he will be reunited, with Norah Williams (great granddaughter of the great King of Showmen, Randall Williams) with whom he was happily married for well over half a century. Allan's much-loved wife passed from Alzheimer's/Dementia just over 5 years ago, and he was with her till the very end, always lovingly and compassionately caring for her every need, even when she had lost all memory of who he, she, or anyone else was. Following her death, Allan chose to spread his beloved lifelong soulmate's ashes on Bradford Moor / Peel Park in Bradford, where they had spent their earliest years together, being pushed about in their prams side-by-side; And, it is there that they will once again be reunited.

RIP Allan Wright Spence, you will be sorely missed by all those who appreciated your integrity and humble generosity of spirit. So much more than the 'simple man' you so often professed to be.